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# COMMUNISM

## AND A CHANGING CIVILISATION

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## INTRODUCTION

ENGLAND had been at relative peace for a hundred years when the war broke out in 1914. During this century ploughboys from the shires, Irish peasant lads, Scottish farm labourers, forced by poverty to the shame of taking the Queen's shilling and donning a red coat, had suffered and died bravely enough under their fox-hunting officers in different parts of the world. A few sentimental songs, some stories in the newspapers, and a faint feeling of complacent pride about the wide empire they had kept or conquered, was all the impression that the uncomplaining sacrifice of their blood made on the life of the nation as a whole.

There had been trouble enough of another kind at home in the first half of the century. Luddite raids, hangings in the castle yard at York, rick-burning in the quiet countryside where squire and parson ruled absolute; then the mobilisation of the Chartist masses, the coming of the miner and the weaver into the national consciousness. Barracks were built in the new factory towns, alongside the grim Bastilles, as the workhouses were called, and, as men and women began to read, thousands of little books and broadsheets, even newspapers, circulated in the huddled slums around the factories, preaching the impieties of socialism and of hatred against the rich.

The rich, while growing richer and more pious, unlike the blaspheming squires of the eighteenth century who drank and whored their estates away, repaid the hatred with interest. "Blessed are the meek," but there is no greater crime before God or man than for the poor to forget their meekness. After 1848 the danger passed but

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the hatred stayed. Peace came at home as well as abroad, and a succession of brilliant statesmen devised means for satisfying the hunger of at least a substantial portion of the working class. The sons of the men who had hidden pistols or beaten out pike blades in the days of Feargus O'Connor and Ernest Jones hung up the portrait of the pious Mr. Gladstone, and men who had been violent republicans in youth made decent reverence to the Widow Queen.

So it became firmly lodged in the minds of Englishmen of all classes that their country was not only better but different. Different laws and another providence guided its fate, and the characteristic of the pharisee to thank God that he is not as other men became one of the chief of the new features added to the British character by the century of peace. Frederick Engels, who was a witness to the change, wrote to Marx in 1858 that "the English proletariat is in fact becoming more and more bourgeois, so that this most bourgeois of all nations evidently wants to bring matters to the pass where it has a bourgeois aristocracy and a bourgeois proletariat *alongside* with the bourgeoisie."

For other countries the nineteenth century was anything but peaceful. The nations of Europe fought a fierce series of wars for their national unification and the destruction of the feudal obstacles in the path of their capitalist development. While Bright, Cobden and Gladstone covered the harsh triumph of the British capitalist class in the respectable broadcloth of free trade and prayer, the young men of other countries were dying on the scaffold and the battlefield or in prison and exile in order to win the same "freedom" for their own countries. Their struggle was complicated by the growth of revolutionary socialism among the working class, which proclaimed the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity to be a sham so long as the exploitation of one man's labour by another

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remained. The ardent young middle-class republicans who dreamed of the day when they should sway a democratic parliament with their oratory looked on this as treason to the cause of progress.

The Communist Revolution, a spectre at the beginning of 1848, broke into flame in Paris in June of the same year. In 1871 the capitalist class of the whole world sighed with relief when Thiers, with the help of German bayonets, destroyed the menace of Communism in being in Paris by a massacre which it was hoped would cow the workers for ever from making any attempt to disturb the new capitalist order which had established itself over the world at such a great cost.

But if the nineteenth century confirmed the British people in the belief that they had entered on an era of eternal peace and prosperity, at home and abroad, and that what happened to the impious peoples of Europe and America was no concern of theirs, the twentieth century was quickly to disabuse them and to show, moreover, that underneath all the seeming stability of the Victorian epoch processes of violent change and disruption had been at work.

1900 opened a new period of storm and stress in human history and did so in such a way that every Englishman who was able to read the signs could tell that the end of the old isolation was here. It was not simply that the war on the independence of the Dutch republics in South Africa struck at other homes than those of the ploughboys and the fox-hunters, or called for greater material sacrifice. It aroused bitter jealousy and antagonism in France and Germany. It almost coincided with a sharp clash with the United States over a matter in Venezuela which few understood very clearly. Perhaps this was one reason why Mafeking night was a moment of hysteria very different from the decorous roasting of oxen which closed the Crimean War.

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Something had changed fundamentally. People talked of imperialism, and what this meant in fact we shall analyse later in this book. But if the real forces at work were only dimly understood, their effects were obvious to all. The great war between the Russian Tsar and the Japanese Emperor in Manchuria was succeeded by revolution and counter-revolution in Russia. Asia, which supposedly had no history, save that which White men graciously gave it with their modern weapons of destruction, suddenly awoke into alarming activity. Persia, Turkey, India, China were all seized by revolutionary movements, while in Europe the talk was all of war. Splendid isolation gave way to the *Entente Cordiale* and British staff officers earnestly studied the terrain of Flanders and Northern France. In the Balkans, trouble in the spring from being a joke became a grim enough reality and caused more than one general mobilisation of the armies and fleets of Europe.

This was not the worst. Socialism again became a word in common use in Britain. New working-men's parties arose, strikes took place which shook the whole country and in a Welsh village miners were shot by the soldiers, one of whom deserted from horror caused by what he had been commanded to do.

In Germany and France the firing of soldiers on strikers became a common thing and in the Champagne district there was real civil war, in the course of which whole regiments mutinied and had to be disarmed. Elements of civil war were in the air, not only in Germany and France or even in Belgium and Austria, whose capitals had been paralysed by General Strikes, but actually in Britain itself. Financed by English bankers and industrialists and a group of wealthy landlords, an armed force was created in Northern Ireland to defy the intention of Parliament to grant Irish Home Rule. It had its English sections who paraded in full military formation in Hyde Park, led by

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ex-officers and prominent Tory politicians. It was common talk that the reactionaries did not intend to stop at smashing Home Rule.

The old world got its death-blow in the war of 1914-18 which destroyed life and squandered the forces of production on a scale unheard of in history.

The war was followed by revolutions of the working class throughout Europe, of which one, in Russia, was successful, replacing the corrupt rule of the landlords and capitalists by a socialist dictatorship of the workers. The war had opened the eyes of millions of people, but above all of the working class, to the complete separation of governments and people, had brought a sharp consciousness of the class divisions in society and of its glaring contradictions. The success of the revolution in the former Russian Empire, the replacing of the autocratic tyranny of the few over the many by the rule of the many over the few, the open proclaiming by the Russian working class of their aim as the complete abolition of classes and class differences, have tended to make the character of these contradictions more obvious, and the economic weaknesses of capitalist society more striking in contrast.

The war of 1914-18, far from being the "last war," has proved to be but the first of a series of clashes, while innumerable "little wars," chiefly waged by great imperialist powers against subject peoples in revolt, have never ceased, in Ireland, in India, in the Near East, in North Africa, in China. The class struggles which have shaken Europe since 1918 have made the pre-war clashes seem mere skirmishes, and even Great Britain, the country where the doctrine of "class peace" was firmest rooted, has witnessed a General Strike and the mobilisation by the Government of seventy-five battalions, of tanks, artillery and cavalry against the working class.

Since 1929 the world has been gripped by an economic crisis so relentless, so violently destructive, so expensive

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and so fraught with suffering to the working class, the farmers and the peasants who have borne its painful burden, that it is no exaggeration to say that it is a catastrophe more far-reaching in its effects than the war, one which has squandered far more of the productive resources of capitalist society, and is costing each day of its duration more than did the war, while the strain of its burden is becoming even more intolerable to the masses. Nor is the burden made easier by the growing consciousness that the present rulers of society are largely maintaining their power by a civil war against the working class, and that the great powers are one and all feverishly preparing for a new series of armed battles. "The frontiers of Britain are on the Rhine," Mr. Baldwin has declared significantly.

The war was a terrible thing. It was also, as Lenin pointed out, for some people a terribly profitable thing. The crisis is a terrible thing, yet few would deny that for some people it has nevertheless proved a terribly profitable thing, and the coming war, unless it is prevented by the indignation of the masses, will prove an even more terribly profitable thing to the same people.

What is the explanation of the bloody career of the twentieth century, which in just over thirty years has claimed more human victims and caused greater material destruction, than any preceding century of human history? Unless we are to go into the dark places of religious mania and see here the punishment for some mysterious sin, there can only be one explanation, that these things arise out of the structure of human society itself.

The present economic crisis has caused a general decline in world production of over a third as compared with 1928. The production of steel and iron in the chief industrial countries has fallen to the level at which it stood at the end of the last century. The crisis has struck agriculture with particular severity, forcing the farmers either to destroy their crops, or to decrease the sown area, owing to the

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impossibility of marketing their production. Nearly half of the great army of industrial workers throughout the world has been affected by unemployment in one form or another, with their families a vast multitude of nearly two hundred million human beings.

Not only are crops destroyed, blast furnaces and ship-yards scrapped, miles of shipping laid up to rust, but the brains and skill of men and women are also allowed to rust away unused, or turned to purely unproductive ends. Finally poverty of the most desperate, terrible kind spreads everywhere, and the newspapers of the most "civilised" country in the world are filled with a bitter dispute as to whether 3,000 or 3,400 calories are sufficient to maintain an unemployed man.

Yet it is universally admitted that this mass poverty and unemployment are not caused through any shortage of commodities. The crisis came about, not because the mines, factories and farms were producing too little, but because they were producing too much. It is, like all the preceding crises of capitalism, a crisis of over-production. Those who suffer from the crisis, the working class, the employees, the small farmers and peasants, form the great majority of the world's population, and, though they are suffering extremes of privation, they do not have the means to purchase and consume the surplus of goods produced.

Men can be at the same time the dupes as well as the agents of the systems they create. It was Sir Edward Grey, the dupe, who on the awful evening of August 3rd, 1914, cried out despairingly, that "the lights are going out over Europe and they will not kindle again in our lifetime." During the Crimean War John Bright for a moment also tore aside the veil in his "angel of death" speech. Might he have lain awake in London during the summer nights of 1934 and listened to the sullen roaring of the bombers he would have been conscious of an even more terrible beating of wings above the homes of England.



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In this same summer Central Europe has lapsed into the barbarism of the Middle Ages, and fascism, the latest gospel of salvation of capitalism in decay, the final form of the capitalist robber state, has shown that it brings not unity, but terror and chronic civil war. In England also, in the centre of London's politest suburb, in the largest of the capital's public halls, fascist violence against the workers has excited horrified protest even from fashionable priests and Tory members of Parliament.

The traditions of a hundred years are in ruins. Reality is forcing itself through every sham, the reality of poverty, unemployment, fascism and war. The lights will not kindle over Europe again of themselves. Capitalist society is in collapse, but unless we understand the laws of its rise and decay, unless we see clearly the disposition of the enemy in the fight for the future of humanity, we shall find the task of freeing ourselves from its grip and building the new society a hundred times more difficult. To the millionaire and his lackeys Communism is still a spectre, but to the millions of the poor and oppressed throughout the world it becomes more and more a hope of life that will once again kindle the lights in Europe.

*September 1934*

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## CHAPTER I

### CAPITALISM IN DECAY AND THE TEACHING OF KARL MARX

#### I

**M**ODERN capitalist society is based on the production of commodities for profit in conditions of capitalist production relations. That is to say, the greater and most important part of the means of the production and exchange of commodities belong to a numerically small class of persons, while the overwhelming majority of the population has no other means of existence than the sale of their labour power to this small group of property owners. In this way the majority of people, the proletarians, who have no property, by their labour create the income of the upper class in society, the factory owners, bankers and landlords.

Since every worker spends more labour in production than suffices to pay back the cost of his own maintenance, that is to say he produces goods greater in value than his own wages, the capitalist receives a quantity of unpaid labour, which his position as monopolist of the economic means of life enables him to force out of the worker. This unpaid labour creates surplus value, the concrete expression of capitalist exploitation. A portion of this surplus value the capitalist spends on his personal needs, a portion he re-invests in his own or other people's business, and a portion goes to the creation of the apparatus of force, violence and deceit necessary to maintain this system of exploitation. The armed forces, police, civil service, law courts, prisons, church, all the various manifestations of the capitalist machine are also maintained by this unpaid

labour of the property-less class of proletarians.

Capitalist society differs from the historical forms of society which have preceded it in its peculiar property relations. It came into being as the result of a long process of expropriation of small private property, that is to say of private property based upon the labour of its owner.

"The transformation of the individual and scattered means of production into socially concentrated means of production, the transformation of the pygmy property of the many into the titan property of the few, the expropriation of the great masses of people from the land, from the means of subsistence, and from the instruments of labour—this terrible and grievous expropriation of the populace—comprises the prelude to the history of capital. ...The expropriation of the immediate producers is effected with ruthless vandalism; and under the stimulus of the most infamous, the basest, the meanest and the most odious passions. Self-earned private property, the private property that may be looked upon as founded on a coalescence of the isolated, individual and independent worker, with his working conditions, is supplanted by capitalist private property, which is maintained by the exploitation of others' labour, but of labour which, in a formal sense, is free," Marx writes in a famous passage of the first volume of *Capital*.

But capitalism, despite the violence and bloodshed which distinguish its development, was a progressive system in comparison with the feudal society which it destroyed. By its concentration of property, by the introduction of co-operation into the process of production, that is the social division of labour, it cleared the way for an enormous development of production, for immense and far-reaching technical advances. With the perfecting of technique and the spreading of the sphere of capitalist production relations till it embraced almost the whole world, the process of capitalist concentration of property

increased also. "What has now to be expropriated, is no longer the labourer working on his own account, but the capitalist who exploits many labourers" (Marx).

The development of this same technical progress gradually changes the whole position of the working class itself. The labour of women and children, or of adolescents, begins to play an ever greater part in industry. The skilled worker has almost gone from the clothing factory, replaced by girls and boys. Even in the most skilled and complicated processes of engineering the labour of women and of adolescents is rapidly driving the craftsman from his last fortress. Since technical advance also means the replacing of men by machines the actual demand for labour far exceeds the supply, so that the dependence of the worker on capital increases, and with it the degree of his exploitation by means of speeding-up, of a greater intensity of labour.

The most remarkable effect of technical progress is, however, the creation of a reserve army of labour, a permanent body of workers for whom society has no employment, except in times of war or as industrial strike-breakers. The growth of this reserve army in recent years has been terrifying and both Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and Mr. Neville Chamberlain, with choking voice and glycerine tears worthy of the walrus and the carpenter at their most emotional, have referred to these two millions of men permanently on the scrap-heap, for whom capitalism can see no hope at least in the next ten years.

Competition between individual capitalists, and between international groups on the world market, makes it more and more difficult for capitalism to get rid of the goods produced in ever-growing quantities. The inevitable effect of the growth of productive forces in capitalist society is over-production leading to periodical crises. The capitalist has created something whose development he cannot control, and the whole system of capitalist

production is in its very nature planless and anarchic, an anarchy rendered all the deeper and more painful since the consuming capacity of the market can never expand enough to meet the growth in production.

Society is in fact in the grip of a fundamental contradiction. The organisation of mine, factory and transport, is a miracle of social planning, of the mastery of the human mind over elemental forces. Production in fact is in its very essence a *social* act, but "exchange and appropriation continue to be *individual* acts, the acts of individuals. *The social product is appropriated by the individual capitalist.* Fundamental contradiction, whence arise all the contradictions in which our present society moves, and which modern industry brings to light."<sup>1</sup> It is this fundamental contradiction which has created the great contradiction between the classes in capitalist society, between proletariat and bourgeoisie.

Crises are usually followed by periods of depression, and then by a revival, and so through the cycle to crisis again. There is no reason for believing that even the present crisis, though it is longer and deeper than any of those preceding it, is the last crisis of capitalism, but, as we shall emphasise later, it has certain features which make it impossible that after its close capitalism should return to a period of peaceful progress and prosperity.

But every crisis, and the present one most particularly, emphasises the real nature of capitalist society. It becomes clear to millions of desperate and hungry persons that the perfection of technique, the replacing of the heaviest and most degrading processes of labour by machinery, the conquest of the air, the almost miraculous perfection of communications, the increase in the productivity of human labour, are only there apparently in mocking contrast to the poverty and hopelessness of the majority of mankind.

<sup>1</sup> Engels, *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*.

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The great gap between those who have and those who have not, the mad waste of human talent, creativeness and energy, the awful insecurity of life, are never more apparent.

In fact, every crisis increases both the relative and the absolute poverty of the masses. No statement in the Marxian analysis of society is more hotly contested than this. Yet none is truer. The gradual development of social reform, better sanitation, improved housing, amusements and education are all brought forward in refutation. Yet two important points are always forgotten, first that the Marxian analysis applies to capitalism as a whole, and not to a particular country or even a particular short period of time, and secondly that the worst effects of capitalism, mass permanent unemployment and war, are always conveniently forgotten or else treated as exceptions which need not be taken into account.

It is perfectly true that for some years in certain imperialist countries capitalism has guaranteed an improved existence to a considerable section of its working class, and that in certain countries, particularly Britain and the United States, it still does so, though on a rapidly declining scale. But in the countries of the East, in South America, in Central and Eastern Europe, in pre-revolutionary Russia, this was not the case. In the imperialist countries themselves the improvement was only relative and of few years' duration. Mass unemployment became a permanent feature of working-class life. The many millions of workers mobilised into the armies in both peace and war would hardly claim their conditions were thereby improved. In certain "advanced" countries, such as Germany, the condition of the working class has declined rapidly and catastrophically. War, starvation and mass unemployment have become features of capitalism which threaten the life and security of every one. There is no "normal" development of capitalism which allows one



to set aside these features. They are themselves in fact its "normal" development, if that word may be used at all.

Naturally, therefore, the development of capitalist society, the growth of its contradictions, have been accompanied by the growing discontent and anger of the working class, by an intense sharpening of their struggle against the exploiting class, breaking from time to time into open civil war, for capitalist society, whatever may be the peaceful and democratic mask concealing the real character of its social relationships, is always pregnant with civil war. The conditions are present for a violent solution of the contradictions of society, conditions summed up by Marx in an unforgettable passage of the first volume of *Capital* :

"One capitalist lays a number of his fellow-capitalists low. Hand-in-hand with such centralisation, concomitantly with the expropriation of many capitalists by the few, the co-operative form of the labour process develops to an ever-increasing degree ; therewith we find a growing tendency towards the purposive application of science to the improvement of technique ; the land is more methodically cultivated ; the instruments of labour tend to assume forms which are only utilisable by combined effort ; the means of production are economised through being turned to account only by joint, by social labour. All the peoples of the world are enmeshed in the net of the world market, and therefore the capitalist regime tends more and more to assume an international character. While there is thus a progressive diminution in the number of the capitalist magnates (who usurp and monopolise all the advantages of this transformative process), there occurs a corresponding increase in the mass of poverty, oppression, enslavement, degeneration and exploitation ; but at the same time there is a steady intensification of the wrath of the working class—a class which grows ever more

numerous, and is disciplined, unified, and organised by the very mechanism of the capitalist method of production. Capitalist monopoly becomes a fetter upon the method of production, which has flourished with it and under it. The centralisation of the means of production and the socialisation of labour reach a point where they prove incompatible with their capitalist husk. This bursts asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated."

The process of capitalist accumulation thus vividly described by Marx has reached its climax in our own time, in the twentieth century. Since the beginning of the century capitalist economy has entered a new phase of imperialism. The process of concentration and centralisation of capital has attained such importance as gradually to lead to the formation of powerful monopolist alliances of the capitalists, to the formation of combines, syndicates, cartels and trusts. These powerful bodies rapidly become the decisive factor in the economic life of the more advanced countries. A similar growth and concentration of banking capital lead to its gradual fusion with industrial capital and to the development of enormous capital exports to other countries.

The growth of productive forces far outstripped the capacity of the impoverished home market, and the conquest of the world market, the search for areas for the profitable investment of surplus capital, became an urgent necessity. Britain, the first country to become completely industrialised, was far ahead of all competitors in this race, though her own industry remained more backward, less concentrated and highly organised than that of her great new competitors in Germany and the United States. British banking capital, British shipping, on the other hand, all the apparatus of her vast export and colonial trade, became even more highly concentrated than was

the case in other countries. Indeed, there is no uniformity in capitalist development, which has been and remains very uneven, both as between countries and, within the various countries, as between different branches of industry.

By the beginning of our century the world was almost completely divided territorially between the great powers the lion's share having fallen to British imperialism, and a desperate struggle for its economic re-division had begun, a struggle in which the great combinations of capital began to play a direct part, controlling politics and the life of states, dictating the pace in the terrible armaments race which now for the first time became a permanent feature of the relations between the different countries.

From such a situation wars were bound to spring, wars for markets, for spheres of investment, raw material and cheap labour power, for world power and the crushing of small or weak nations by the great imperialist powers. The war of 1914-18 was the first such war, a veritable world war waged by more than sixty nations in every corner of the globe.

If imperialism has been the age of the wireless, the aeroplane, the submarine, if it has built railways across the deserts, if it has enabled men for the first time to reach the two poles of the earth, if it has created all the *conditions* for the unification of humanity, its actual *effects* have been the very opposite. Science and medicine have made their greatest progress in a period of famine, disease and the ghastly mutilation of thousands. Communications have bound the world together at a time when national hatreds and oppressions have reached their climax in human history, which has never before known a time when the majority of the world's population has been kept in subjection by a minority of half a dozen nations claiming permanent racial superiority.

Finally, technique and education have advanced in giant strides at the same time as the inability of society to

utilise the creative energy of the mass of its members, or to give them any but the smallest share in the great advances made, has been most remorselessly exposed.

The cause is not far to seek. Imperialism has developed to an extreme degree the contradictions and antagonisms of capitalist society. The level of development of world capitalism has become exceedingly high. The anarchy of free competition has given way to monopolies, often supported or even controlled by the State, the banks and the great trusts have created a vast apparatus in the effort to regulate production and distribution. The social character of capitalist production has never been more apparent. Yet the robber, exploiting character of capitalist appropriation, in glaring contradiction to this, is also nakedly exposed. As the trusts and monopolies have grown, the cost of living has increased by leaps and bounds. The pressure on the working class, which to defend even its bread and butter has to contend against the whole force of the State, as during the General Strike of 1926, has become almost unbearable, its economic and political struggle a hundred times more difficult.

The horrors, suffering, savagery and ruin to which the war gave birth have become a normal part of the life of capitalist society. Capitalism has reached the stage in its development when the proletarian, communist revolution has begun. The war of 1914-18, ending in a struggle of the working class for power in many countries, and the triumph of that struggle in the former Russian empire, was the beginning of an era of wars and revolutions, of the collapse of capitalist society and the growth of communist society.

The successes of the working class in Russia, who are now directly approaching the completion of their construction of a new society on a classless basis, from which the contradictions of capitalism have been violently eliminated, are a living proof that only the communist

revolution of the working class can lead humanity out of the vicious circle of war and poverty created by imperialism.

## II

Marxism, which, in England at least, for generations has been ignored or sniggered at by the superior, including unfortunately, most of the leaders of the British working-class movement, can now no longer be ignored, and lip-service to Marx's name comes to-day from the most unlikely quarters. The actual achievements of socialism in the Soviet Union, the growth of a world revolutionary movement of great power, combined with the crisis of capitalist society as a whole, have clothed Marxism with a living reality which may still be argued against, but hardly ignored or disposed of with a sneer.

Lenin, in speaking to the Congress of Young Communists in Moscow in 1920, splendidly summed up and explained the significance of Marx. "You have read and heard," he said, "of how Communist theory and Communist science are chiefly the creation of Marx. You have read how this teaching of Marxism has ceased to be the work of a single nineteenth-century socialist, even though he was a genius, and how this teaching has become the teaching of tens of millions of proletarians throughout the world who are applying this teaching in their struggle against capitalism. And if you put the following question: Why was Marx's teaching able to win the hearts of tens of millions of the most revolutionary class, you would only get one reply. This has happened because Marx based his work on the firm foundation of human knowledge which had been conquered under capitalism. In studying the laws of the development of human society, Marx understood the inevitability of the development of capitalism leading to communism, and, above all, he proved this only on the basis of the most exact, detailed and deep study of this

capitalist society, through the full assimilation of all which science has given in the past. He refashioned critically all that has been created by human society, leaving not a single point without attention. He refashioned all that has been created by human thought, submitting it to criticism, checking it by the labour movement, and drawing those conclusions which are impossible for persons limited by a bourgeois framework or bound by bourgeois prejudices."

Lest it should be thought that Lenin perhaps exaggerated a little the achievement of Marx, it is of interest to note that the London School of Economics, wishing to refute Marxism, was compelled to mobilise not one, nor even two professors, but a whole pleiad of philosophers, historians, economists, lawyers, biologists, physicists and chemists. The refutation of Marx has for generations been almost an obligation for the militant university professor, yet so far not one professor has ever set himself the task of examining the interesting paradox that the more Marx is "refuted" the stronger grows the influence of his ideas and the more widespread and deeply rooted they become. One can find a very simple explanation for this paradox, so simple as to make it impossible for the explanation to commend itself in academic circles. Bourgeois science, philosophy and economics are compelled to give so much of their best energies to attacking Marxism because Marxism is true, because it gives a correct picture of the world and its development.

Marx, more consistently and with greater genius than any other thinker, saw the motive power of world history in the class struggle and understood the conclusions to be drawn from this. It is the very development of this class struggle along the lines foreseen by Marx which is the greatest confirmation of his teaching, as it is also the cause of the desperate attacks made upon that teaching. Marxian materialism has shown the worker how it is possible for

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him to throw off the spiritual enslavement which class society has forced upon him. Marx's economic theory has made clear to him his real position in the capitalist system beneath all the appearances of "freedom" in which that position is disguised, while Marx's teaching on socialism and the class struggle has both shown the way to the emancipation of the working class and to the destruction of class society and exploitation as such.

The most frequent objection to Marxism, and hence to the whole theoretical basis of Communism, is that it does not correspond to the conditions of modern life. Marx died fifty years ago, on the eve of immense and far-reaching changes. How then can his work be valid for a society which has passed through those changes? But the development of capitalism, far from solving those inner contradictions which the analysis of Marx laid bare, has intensified them a hundredfold. The enormous development of capitalist concentration to the point of monopoly had not taken place in Marx's lifetime, but it was fully foreseen by Engels and himself, and Lenin has developed Marxism still further by applying its laws to this new, imperialist stage.

The present economic crisis, the whole crisis of the capitalist system which began with the war of 1914-18, is the living proof that the capitalist system of production has developed not towards an overcoming or a softening of these contradictions, but towards their ever greater sharpening. Let us sum up these contradictions and antagonisms, since the whole struggle of the working class for a socialist method of production arises from them.

Firstly, the severance of the producer from the means of production and the consequent condemnation of enormous masses of people to wage-labour for life, have developed since the death of Marx to a very important degree. In a highly industrialised country such as Britain the process is almost complete, in both agriculture and

## THE TEACHING OF KARL MARX

industry, while even in countries where capitalist development is still backward, such as China or India, their entry into the world market has greatly hastened the process with all its violent consequences and the untold suffering which accompany it. The antagonism between proletariat and bourgeoisie is reaching its climax, though it develops unequally, according to various historical and economic circumstances. But the most academic of social historians could hardly deny that since 1914 civil war has become an almost permanent feature of social life in the capitalist world.

Secondly, while competition within each country has been in some respects limited (though in others heightened) by the growth of monopoly, on a world scale it has reached the stage of permanent economic war between the great national monopolies, expressed in tariffs, quotas, trade embargoes, inflation measures, state subsidies, and a score of other forms. The battle for the diminishing world market is not the chief feature of the relations between capitalist states. The contradiction between the development of socialised production and distribution within the individual enterprise, or even state, and social anarchy in production as a whole, is also reaching a climax. Planning in production has become an inevitable necessity for modern society, but it is one which the production relations of that society prevent it from realising.

Thirdly, the revolutionary advances in technique, the rapid development of new forms of transport and communication, have had the effect on the one hand of increasing the permanent army of unemployed in each country from a few thousands to millions, of making pauperism, hitherto on a large scale the prerogative of agrarian countries, a feature of every great city, while on the other hand the productive forces of society have increased by leaps and bounds. Over-production, crises, have become more frequent and more severe, while the



great gap separating the ever-narrowing group of large monopolist property-owners from the mass of propertyless wage workers has become wider, more unbridgeable, and more glaringly obvious. The optimism which characterised capitalism in its early period of development has given way to a deep pessimism. The forces of production have developed to an extent which makes them appear to their amazed masters as a menace, and prayers are offered up in the churches for a "moratorium" in scientific advance.

The workers, the smaller employees and technical staffs, the middle class and poor peasantry, are being forced into ever greater poverty and insecurity, while at the same time there is an excess of both the means of production and of the products themselves. "*The mode of production rises in rebellion against the form of exchange.*" The bourgeoisie are convicted of incapacity to manage their own social productive forces," thus Engels sums up the position. They are also shown by the very development of production to be a superfluous class.<sup>1</sup> Modern industrial organisation is largely the work of highly paid specialists and the very fact that the oligarch of modern capitalism is able to hold a host of directorships in different companies is perhaps one of the most striking proofs of his parasitic character.

It is the argument of reformism that in this way capitalism gradually and painlessly transforms itself into "socialism." Indeed, the reformist commonly enough calls

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<sup>1</sup> This has led such theorists as Mr. J. M. Keynes into the amusing delusion that the capitalist bourgeoisie is already "superseded" by a trained "salaried" of managers and technicians. The absurdity of this is obvious enough not to call for our special refutation. The point of view is however an interesting reflection of the truth of Engels' claim.

capitalism which has reached this stage of development "socialism." In Germany, for example, where the participation of the capitalist state in industry was particularly advanced, leaders of social-democracy declared at their Party Congress in 1932 that Germany was more advanced on the road to socialism than Russia. Similarly, in Britain, the organisation with state aid of such immense monopolies as the Central Electricity Board and the London Passenger Transport Board, has been hailed as "socialism," while the leaders of reformism are also greeting the Roosevelt N. R. A. as a great work of socialist planning.

It does not need much reflection to see either that there is no painless path to socialism, or the essentially capitalist character of the enterprises mentioned. The present economic crisis, more costly and more pregnant with suffering even than the war, is hardly a painless process, while the crisis, far from solving any of the contradictions of capitalism, has, as we have seen, sharpened them to an unbearable extent. Capitalism itself in these circumstances, far from showing signs of a pacific transition to a socialist society, has never been so exposed as a system of terror and violence against the classes which it exploits. True, state subsidies to the great trusts, of which the Treasury subsidy to the Cunard Line is an excellent example, become larger and more frequent, while the state and monopoly capital become more and more openly merged together. True, the desperate character of the crisis forces more and more state interference and efforts at "planning," but the national difficulties of capitalism are thereby only partially relieved, while capitalism as a whole, on an international scale, is plunged into deeper and more terrible difficulties, in which war becomes a constant menace. The most extreme example of this is fascist Germany, where state interference with economic life has gone to greater lengths and is achieving greater chaos than any other country.

It is significant that as "socialism" of this character

develops, so also does the violently reactionary character of the imperialist state. The establishment of fascist dictatorships in some countries, the effort to wrest away existing democratic rights of the workers in all countries, the immense development of the parasitic character of the capitalist state, these are the signs which are accompanying what the reformist theoreticians acclaim as the transition to socialism.

In fact, these deepening contradictions can only be solved by working-class revolution, by the seizure of power by the working class and the transformation of the means of production into public, socialist property. Freed from the burden of rent, profit and interest, from the enormous tribute paid to their private owners, the means of production are then really able to work on a pre-determined plan. It becomes possible, when the working class are masters of state power, to raise continually the material conditions of the population, to destroy the central contradiction of capitalist economy—that between social production and private appropriation of the product. Anarchy of production and unemployment consequently disappear.

The state power of the workers is used to destroy the economic bases of classes themselves, as society progresses towards complete socialism. With the disappearance of the central contradiction of capitalist production, so the central antagonism of capitalist society, the antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat, capitalist and worker, is also destroyed.

"To accomplish this act of universal emancipation is the historical mission of the modern proletariat," writes Engels. "To thoroughly comprehend the historical conditions and thus the very nature of this act, to impart to the now oppressed proletarian class a full knowledge of the conditions and of the meaning of the momentous act it is called upon to accomplish, this is the task of the theoretical expression of the proletarian movement, scientific socialism."

## III

Communism then, is no abstract theory, no ideal to which reality must be made to conform; it is, as Marx emphasises, "the actual movement which destroys the present situation," or as Lenin expresses it, Marxism itself is "the theory of the proletariat in its struggle for freedom." Marxism began, as Lenin points out, in the period before 1848 only as one of many socialist tendencies, tendencies which rejected materialism, which did not acknowledge the working class as the builder of socialist society, which believed in the peaceful transformation of society and in the general, non-class meaning of such words as "justice," "the people," "law," etc.

This socialism, Utopian socialism as it is called, already shaken theoretically by the struggle which Marx and Engels waged against it, received its death-blow in the revolutionary movements of 1848. *The Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels, appearing almost as the first shots are fired in 1848, was brilliantly confirmed in its analysis of the history of human society as a history of class struggles and particularly in its analysis of the latest form of human society, capitalist society, with its struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat. Marx and Engels became world-famous as the leaders and creators of scientific, working-class socialism. In the period between 1848 and 1871 pre-Marxian socialism dies and the first independent working-class parties, the First International (1864-1872) and German social-democracy, are born.

The Paris Commune of 1871, the seizure of power by the Paris workers and the establishment of their dictatorship not only enriched Marxism and the working class with new and invaluable experiences, it was the starting-point for the development of mass parties of the working class everywhere, parties in which the teaching of Marxism triumphed. The essence of that teaching was that the

working class could only solve the contradictions of capitalism by revolutionary means, by the establishment of the workers as the ruling class to carry through the transition from capitalism to socialist, classless society. The attempt of the opportunists to distort this teaching, to replace it by the doctrine of class peace and peaceful "democratic" transition, for a time had considerable success in the socialist movement, but it was significant that in most countries that success was only possible because the opportunists called themselves Marxists and because a considerable section of them, the so-called centrists, of whom Karl Kautsky was the best known, still concealed their desertion under revolutionary phrases.

The first Russian revolution in 1905, the growth of Bolshevism in Russia and the effort of Lenin to rally an international struggle against opportunism, and particularly against centrism, in the old Second International, proved however that revolutionary Marxism, because it corresponded to the actual movement, had unquenchable vitality. It was not Marxism but opportunism which was vanquished in 1914. The imperialist war not only saw the victory of the working-class revolution in one important capitalist country, it also saw the birth of a revolutionary Marxist party on a world scale, the Communist International. To-day the Second International is passing through its second great crisis, and apart from the British Labour party, and the parties of Scandinavian and French socialists, is rapidly losing its mass influence. In all its sections the temporary victory of German fascism has created splits and divisions. But the Communist International has now grown into a real world party which no reaction can shake and no crisis can affect. The experience of their struggle convinces every day thousands of workers, of advanced intellectuals, of poor peasants and farmers, that their only hope is in Communism and that their strongest weapon is revolutionary Marxism. ..

## CHAPTER II

### TWO WORLDS AT WAR

#### I

WE may therefore sum up capitalism as being a mode of production social in character, since it depends upon a minute division of the labour process and the concentration of the instruments of production into vast enterprises, but this social character of capitalist production is in sharp contrast to the private character of appropriation of the product of social labour, a fundamental contradiction which determines the whole development of capitalist society. Under this system production is not for immediate consumption but for sale on the market, while labour itself becomes a commodity for sale, subject to the laws of the market. Production is for profit, and is carried on not according to a plan, as its social character should demand, but anarchically, subject to the competition between individuals and groups, as is enforced by the private character of appropriation. Lastly, capitalist production divides society into two chief classes (into two *chief*, not into two classes), into the class of the exploited hired wage-earners and the class of owners of the means of production and distribution, the capitalist bourgeoisie.

The central contradiction in the capitalist mode of production brings it to a point where it is unable to develop its productive forces further, where those productive forces come into sharp and violent conflict with the productive relations in society and a new mode of production, socialism, has to take its place.

Though the contradictions of capitalism make themselves felt in all stages of its development, it is in its latest stage, that of imperialism, that they become most glaring, and the conflict between productive forces and productive relations stands out most sharply. Capitalism can only reproduce on an extended scale the social relations which it creates, relations based on exploitation of human labour power and expressed in enormous concentrations of wealth and luxury on the one hand and a vast sea of poverty, suffering and unemployment on the other. As it develops to its highest stage of imperialism, as it exports capital to the very ends of the earth, it also brings under its oppression multitudes of people belonging to another class, the peasants of colonial and semi-colonial countries, whom it exploits by savage feudal methods, through the landlord, the tax-gatherer and the money-lender.

The struggle of classes, which in human history has always been the chief, decisive factor, under capitalism, particularly under imperialism, reaches an intensity and a savagery before unknown. Two main revolutionary forces organise against the might of capital, the working class in the great imperialist states and the masses of the labouring people in the colonies, the victims of the oppression of foreign capital. This struggle is unescapable, permeates every feature of social life, colours the outlook and directs the thoughts, in one way or another, of the overwhelming majority of mankind. The very cities and villages in which we live express it in their architecture, in their planning, in their organisation.

Nothing could be more dangerous and more foolish than to imagine that this struggle between the classes proceeds mechanically, that one side grows weaker and the other stronger till the decisive moment comes. History is always more subtle, more many-sided and complicated than people's idea of it, while it must always be borne in mind that the class struggle is not a conflict of blind forces,

but a battle between human beings who are burdened with traditions, hampered with prejudices, and also equipped with an infinite number of shifts and desperate stratagems.

In Germany, for example, the first open opposition to fascism assumed a religious guise, while in India the first great anti-imperialist movement of 1919-1921 was steeped in the mysticism of both Hinduism and Pan-Islam. In France at the close of the nineteenth century the persecution of a Jewish officer by a clerical-militarist clique developed into a revolutionary situation which threatened the whole existence of the bourgeois republic. Such examples could be multiplied indefinitely. By the ordinary historian such outward phenomena are currently passed off for the inner causes, as, for example, when the Indian Mutiny is explained in the school text-books as being due to the greasing of cartridges with cow fat and the consequent offence to Hindu religious prejudice.

Capitalism itself has complicated the development of the class struggle by seeking for allies in the ranks of the workers. The growth of monopoly, both of colonial monopoly and the industrial-financial monopolies of the great trusts, has made possible the creation of a privileged section of the workers in most countries whose standards of life merge with those of the small bourgeoisie, the employees, teachers, technicians and so on, and whose political ideas are consequently based upon the possibility of a peaceful co-operation with those whom they have come to look upon as the guarantors of their comfort and their daily bread. For certain of these happy few society does even better, finding places for them in its system of administration, making them little gifts (or not so little), seeing that their children are given good jobs, that they are paid well for the newspaper articles the publication of which is not always warranted by the excellence of their contents, or to speak crudely of a perfectly gentlemanly proceeding, they are bribed. The trade unions themselves in time see



to it that their officials are well enough paid, sufficiently well-treated in the matter of "expenses" (oh, happy work, what a multitude of Panamas does it cover!) to give them a leading place in their little world miscalled in the yellow Press "the world of labour".

It is this section, in alliance with certain members of the bourgeoisie and lower middle-class, which in all capitalist countries during the epoch of imperialism has taken the leadership of the socialist and labour parties and of the great trade unions. The parties of the Second International are not parties of the working class, they are, as Stalin has said, parties which represent a union of the working class and the petty-bourgeoisie in which the intellectual leadership comes from the latter.

What is this petty-bourgeoisie of which so much is heard in Marxist literature? It is that intermediate class lying between the great mass of wage earners on the one hand and the bourgeoisie proper on the other. It consists in the first place of small property-owners who do not exploit wage labour, or exploit it to an entirely negligible extent, such as small farmers, peasants, handicraft workers, shop-keepers. To them we may add those who by their intermediate position in society are subject to the same waverings and hesitations, the same confused and changing political and social ideas, the better-paid technicians, the administrative staffs of big businesses, the upper civil servants, lawyers, journalists and small "professional men" generally.

The life of this numerous class is insecure. Some of them by luck, by striving, unscrupulousness or even by superior intelligence manage to reach the upper ranks of society, to invest savings, to become property owners, others sink into the working class, or drift into the ranks of the declassed and unemployed intelligentsia; the majority, by dint of stubborn exercise of the qualities most degrading to human nature, or again by good fortune, keep their position somehow.

It is in the nature of things that such a class should link its interests with those above or those below. It can play no decisive part in modern society because it occupies no decisive position. It is scattered and unable to organise, to fight an independent battle. It is a class which suffers from the oppression of the trusts, of large-scale capital. The only force capable of fighting a battle to the end against finance-capital is the working class, and that battle demands sacrifices and heroism which few of the petty-bourgeoisie are willing to give for what seems to them a distant end. Nevertheless some of them are inclined to "sympathise" with the working class, to seize upon certain aspects of the revolutionary socialist thought of the workers and on this basis to seek for a middle way out of the conflict which shakes capitalist society.

Joining hands with the section of the workers nearest to them in ideas and outlook, the labour aristocracy, even adopting a "Marxism" which they modify to suit their own aims, they form the leadership of those parties which have given to the countries of Western Europe since the war so many cabinet ministers and chiefs of police sworn to introduce socialism by gradual and peaceable means.

They have proved in fact capable administrators of the capitalist state and faithful servants of the ruling class, a splendid channel for the infiltration of capitalist ideas among the workers, for their distraction and division. When they have failed to prevent the discontent and anger of the workers from keeping within bounds, when their own character has become clear to decisive sections of the workers, then they shift their ground with considerable rapidity. When the economic crisis becomes so serious that no amount of fine socialist speeches can conceal the facts that unemployment grows, that wages fall, that the policeman's baton and the machine-gun are the final arbiters in all industrial disputes, that the instruments of production remain in the same hands, even though these

hands don for a change the gloves of "public utility," and that the petty-bourgeoisie itself is feeling the full weight of the crisis, is becoming anti-capitalist, then it becomes dangerous to allow such "representatives of the people" to continue in office.

The petty-bourgeoisie, always torn between the two great contending forces in modern society, naturally contains a healthy proportion of people of reactionary ideas, who are completely servile to the masters of society, whose set of ideas is provided for them by the headlines of the Press of finance capital. The failure of social democracy allows them to become reinforced with a plentiful supply of "disillusioned socialists," they can be joined also by some of the worst of the labour aristocracy, by the more despairing of the unemployed, by the backward sections of the peasantry, and the ruling class has again a mass party at its service to hold its last fortresses by declaring civil war upon the workers in the name of "Fascism."

How this becomes possible will be dealt with later; now it is sufficient to emphasise that the petty-bourgeoisie can play no independent part, can have no policy of its own. It can indulge in revolutionary action, as for example the many militant movements of the American farmers, but its actions are doomed to failure except when they are linked with a general movement of the working class and are under the leadership of the working class.

The working class is in fact the most exploited class in modern society whose daily life is a continual fight against oppression and the conditions in which it is placed by its position in the process of production. In the factory the worker is absolutely dependent upon the caprice of manager or foreman, who may bully, torment or discriminate against him at will. He is subject to continual petty meanness in order that his wages may be reduced to the barest minimum, meanness that a Balzac or a Maupassant might hesitate to describe lest they be accused of distorting human

nature. He is timed in every action of his working day by a stop watch, and even, most ironically, called upon to pay subscriptions from his scanty wages to sports clubs that he may recruit his strength for his employer's benefit.

His home is, by common consent of princes and archbishops, a scandal to civilisation, and lest he should be led into imagining for a moment that, however humble, it is still his castle, it is subject to all sorts of intolerable intrusions from Church and State, and from time to time he, his wife and his children, are called upon to answer the most humiliating questions. He is spied upon at his work, for the informer is such a common institution of all capitalist enterprises that it is accepted almost without comment, and should he fall out of work he is spied upon officially by servants of the State lest he "rob" that paternal institution by secretly earning an extra shilling or two for his wife and children.

His diet and that of his family is the subject of public controversy and it is possible for newspapers to debate solemnly whether he is to be fed on 5s. or 5s. 3d. a week, while in the same columns astonished doctors point out modestly that 10s. a week is just sufficient decently to nourish a grown man or woman. With the blessing of Church and of the head of the State a campaign to provide him with proper housing is commenced and shortly after it is shamefacedly allowed to creep into print (but not too prominently) that the landlord system means that to put the worker into a new house is to rob him of the last chance of properly nourishing himself and his family, owing to the increased rent demanded. If a worker possesses energy and ability it cannot make him master of a trade or improve his position. It is more likely to get him into prison, for kindly investigators have recently been astonished to discover to what an extent most "criminals" possess those qualities. If a working girl has

beauty it is as likely to bring her to the brothel as to make her the mother of splendid sons.

The barracks, the workhouse, the labour camp, the prison and the brothel are the capitalist solutions for the problem of "over-population," over-population which is in fact artificial, since the limits to the population which the world might sustain have not yet been fixed by science.

The working class has never accepted these conditions without violent protest, even when they have been covered with the most enticing fictions of religion, philanthropy and of "democratic" policy. It has never considered and never can consider the present society as divinely ordained or as eternally established. It is for this reason that it has never been a "respectable" class and so many of its own "leaders" have therefore hastened to assume the manners and the customs of their rulers in order to mark their attainment of respectability, which word may be translated as meaning belief in the sanctity of private property.

## II

In the early days of capitalist society, when machine production was still weakly developed and factories were small, when many workers still carried on industry in their own homes, but with tools belonging to their masters, or hired from them, the workers only dimly realised the nature of the exploitation from which they suffered. They would blame the machine rather than the master, look to the past rather than the future. They were still, as Marx said, "a class in themselves."

But as capitalism became all-powerful and all-conquering, as the workers were gradually concentrated in huge factories or on complicated transport systems, as the growth of technique demanded a growth in their own education (factory and machine production, as the English capitalists quickly saw, calls for an educated proletariat), as their

battles with their masters assumed a wider scale and began to need greater organisation and more consciousness of their aims, the workers became alive to their common interests and created class organisations in the form of trade unions and co-operatives. They became aware that they could only change their condition finally by changing their position in society, since it was becoming clear to them that their interests and the interests of the capitalists were irreconcilable. Since this involved political struggle, a struggle for power, they created their own political parties to lead and organise this struggle. They had now become, as Marx says, "a class for themselves."

It is the combination of this fact with the actual decay of capitalist society itself due to its inner contradictions which makes socialism inevitable. Were it not that, as the *Communist Manifesto* says, "the essential condition for the existence and sway of the bourgeois class is the formation and augmentation of capital; the condition for capital is wage-labour," were it not that capitalism inevitably gives birth to this class whose every interest is opposed to itself, and whose conditions of life unite its members together, forge for them eventually one will and one aim, then capitalism might collapse a thousand times, but socialism would not necessarily follow. When the slave empire of the Romans broke up, when the society it had created fell beneath the intolerable burden of its own contradictions, its ruin hastened on by barbarian invasions, no revolutionary class was there to lead in the building of a new society. Feudal Europe arose only after centuries of torment and chaos, in which civilisation and culture had almost disappeared from the western world.

Yet the peculiarity of the crisis in our own society through which we are living to-day is precisely the fact that is expressed in a direct and open struggle between the past and the future, between two worlds, the world of dying capitalism and the world of young socialism.

Though the old man be an unconscionable time a-dying and the torments of the birth of the new man are painful and long, these are none the less the two processes at work in the world to-day.

In speaking of crisis, it should be understood that not merely the economic crisis is meant, but a crisis in the whole system of capitalism, upon the background of which the economic crisis has developed since 1929. The crisis of capitalism is a general crisis affecting the whole system, it is society in the pangs of death and of birth. We know in general that periodic crises of over-production have occurred through the history of capitalism, crises springing from that central contradiction between the social mode of production and the private nature of appropriation. In the past these crises have been overcome by the capitalists in two ways, "on the one hand by the enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces ; on the other by the conquest of new markets, and by the more thorough exploitation of old ones."<sup>1</sup>

For generations it always proved possible after a crisis to expand the home market and to develop new markets in Africa, in South America, in China, in India, in the lands of "the lesser breeds." But since the end of the last century a change has gradually come over the world. The great industrial countries of Germany and the United States, even France to a lesser extent, have themselves begun to change from importers into exporters, while violent competition has raged between the small group of leading capitalist powers, the "aristocrats" of capitalist society, for control and monopoly over the world market. This change has been accompanied by an enormous and rapid growth of trusts, of great monopolies, which have developed the social organisation of production and distribution to a high degree, but have not, and could not have, done

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<sup>1</sup> *Communist Manifesto.*

anything to increase the consumptive powers of the people to equal this growth in production and technique, which have on the contrary, *decreased* that consumptive power through increasing intensity of exploitation.

In the home market technical advance has created a great increase in the army of the hungry and the workless, a capitalist "over-population" far out-weighting the increased "prosperity" once created by the small gobbets from the oligarch's table which were flung to a section of the working-class. As for the "backward" countries—"oh, that my missionaries may for the good Lord's sake persuade the African to add—not a cubit to his stature, but an inch to his shirt!" is the prayer of the manufacturer. But the Lord has remained largely unresponsive, and the feudal oppression of the peasant millions of Africa, Asia and South America has decreased rather than increased their purchasing power, though human capacity for enduring suffering has been the only limit to the extent of their exploitation.

Imperialism has intensified an hundredfold the fundamental contradiction of capitalism. If we read our newspapers, listen to our preachers, absorb the words of statesmen and poets, of philosophers and popular novelists, they have but one theme to-day, fear of the machine, dread of progress, a suspicion of science. Gone for ever the unbounded optimism of the days of free competition, when the steel rails of capitalism were to conquer the desert, bring the Bible and the travellers' samples to the African forest or the most temple-ridden Indian village. What is the meaning of the modern fear of science, of the reaction from technical progress? It is simply a covering for the glaring nakedness of this fact, that though the machines may work wonders they cannot feed millions while they remain the private property of the few. The absurdities of a Spengler, the prayers of parsons and the moans of prime ministers are but efforts to avoid facing the inevit-



able consequences of this fact.

The extreme and violent sharpening of this central contradiction led to the furious struggle for world power between Britain and Germany, and finally to the world slaughter of 1914-18 for the redivision of the world among the "happy few" of the Great Powers. The remedy was a painful and a savage one, but it could not rid capitalism of its cancer. On the contrary, the effect of the surgeon's knife was that the roots spread deeper, through the whole organism, towards the very heart, and that a general crisis of the whole system developed.

The workers and the peasants, who had suffered most from the war, revolted violently against the war-makers in many countries, and in one, the former empire of the Tsars, they not only seized power, but held it triumphantly, proving that suffering is never hopeless and that men who have suffered unendurable things are only trained thereby to suffer even greater pains in their struggle against oppression.

The ragged armies of the revolution in the midst of desolation and famine were inspired and led by a new hope and a new principle which had its embodiment in a new kind of political organisation, a party of working-class revolutionaries who united all that was best, most militant and conscious in their class. The November revolution was a socialist revolution of the working class, supported by the main mass of peasantry, a revolution against private property in the instruments of production and the land, against exploitation and the division of society into classes. From now on there was to be no longer one world but two worlds, as there are two classes, two irreconcilable worlds of capitalism and socialism.

But the general crisis meant also that the central contradiction was inevitably sharpened and intensified, and with it the antagonism between exploited and exploiter, as well as the furious enmities between the various capitalist

states. During the war many industries grew enormously, but the war itself could not solve, save in a very limited and temporary sense, the vital question of the restriction of markets. The Balfour Commission on industry and trade has sadly pointed out that in those countries which had formerly been looked upon only as "primary producers," the war meant a development in industrialisation. Cotton mills in Bombay and Shanghai, steel plants in Jamshedpur, the emergence of Italy and Japan as powerful imperialist countries, these things could not be compensated for even by the provinces torn away from Germany, Austria and Turkey, even by handing over whole nations to the exploitation of the victors.

But in the years after the war, though Central Europe was not a cheerful place for the worker or the clerk, though the peasant in China or India could hardly become hysterical over the benefits of pacifism and prosperity, capitalism achieved some sort of stabilisation, so that all its prophets were sure the operation had been successful and "socialists" took turn and turn about at the bedside with the most extreme reactionaries, or even, as in Germany, joined hands with them over the patient in a peace that could be quite easily understood. Industry revived as the need to restore the desolation of the war became urgent and for some time the rebuilding of the war-devastated areas, the floating of loans to the defeated countries, provided a brisk enough market. The war, moreover, had created new industries. It was useful that cheap stockings and underwear could be produced by factories which could turn overnight from the production of artificial silk to that of deadly chemicals. It was in this period that the first great drive for the rationalisation of the capitalist factories and transport systems was made. Mechanisation of the processes of labour, minute subdivision of each operation, the use of the conveyor belt, speeding-up and timing systems, were introduced on the

widest scale. It was now that the terms "mass-man" and "robot" passed into common speech. Whether or not Mr. Baldwin told the miners' leaders on the eve of the General Strike that "the wages of all workers must come down," this in effect was what also happened.

By such means capitalism by 1927 had in general reached the output level of 1914, with a productive machinery of almost twice the power of that of 1914. Yet it was this very victory which proved fatal to stabilisation because of the growing development of the general crisis of capitalism and the consequent restriction of markets. In every country the war between the workers and their masters had been growing more bitter. In Bulgaria, in Germany, in Austria there had been armed outbreaks, in Britain a general strike, while the murder of two innocent Italian workers, Sacco and Vanzetti, by American imperialism, caused a wave of violent indignation against capitalist oppression throughout the world. In India there was a boycott of British goods, in China a boycott also and a great revolutionary national movement. In Europe the system by which one group of imperialists attempted to enslave another did not seem to work any longer, while the efforts of the United States to conquer European and Far Eastern markets for the export of goods and of capital, everywhere roused resentment from the older robbers, and particularly from Britain. Nor were things improved by the fact that one-sixth of the world, and that one of the richest areas, had been withdrawn altogether from capitalist exploitation.

All these were developments of the general crisis, all having as their eventual consequence a restriction of markets and an intensification of the furious antagonisms of capitalist society. From this inevitably developed the world economic crisis which began in 1929, a crisis of over-production which is closely linked with the general crisis of the whole system and every day becomes more

closely intertwined with it. The crisis was caused because the mines, mills and factories of the great industrial countries had produced more than could be sold, because the poverty-stricken population of the world, poverty-stricken as the result of the war, of the general crisis of capitalism, could no longer feed and clothe themselves as before. It was a crisis that struck agriculture equally hard, which indeed struck agriculture first.

Slowly and toilsomely production had crept back to the level of 1914, even just a little surpassed it, and then the crash came. Despite all the great improvements in technique, the creation of new industries, artificial silk, gramophones, wireless, cheap automobiles, despite all the false appearance of prosperity, the world was not in fact capable of consuming as much as it had done in 1914. Production fell back to the level of two generations ago, in some cases and in some important industries even back to the level of the 'seventies of the last century. Sometimes, as at Penistone, the closing of a plant meant that a whole town was without work. Peasants and farmers, loaded with mortgages and debt, faced utter ruin and, paradox of paradoxes, even starvation, for cotton cannot be eaten and the old self-sufficing farmstead had long disappeared before specialised market production. Their crops were burned or flung into the sea, they were forbidden by law to sow more than a certain area, and in a desperate effort to keep up prices they entered in some countries into a sullen war with the cities. In the United States the war from time to time became a very real one, whole States being under martial law, and armed commandoes of farmers picketed the roads and bridges to prevent the transport of produce to the cities. In India, Burma, China and other colonial countries the red cock of arson crowed from the barns of the land-lord and the roof tree of the money-lender, and taxes were collected by the punitive expeditions of the governments.

Add to this picture the hungry armies of unemployed and their families, the evictions, the strike struggles, the battles in the streets, the recruiting of private armies for civil war against the working class and you have a picture of the growth of the crisis to the end of 1933 as it might appear, say, in a lecture by a historian some fifty years from now. But to this picture there is another side. It is not to be supposed that capitalism accepts such catastrophes helplessly. Some way out it is bound to seek and the present crisis has been very prolific of plans for overcoming this and all future crises. The very immense development of the organisation of production and its painful contrast with the anarchic conditions of the present has naturally impressed itself upon every mind, so that even the most optimistic politician who four years ago was convinced that Mr. Henry Ford and Mr. Kreuger were leading the world into the millennium, does not now fail to stress this in his speeches.

The fact is that capitalism has long developed to the point where economic planning is not only necessary, but inevitable. The only misfortune is that the property-relations characteristic of capitalist society prevent such planning, which can only come as the result of the forcible smashing of these relations, of the expropriation of the capitalist class. For a long time, in the period of post-war "prosperity," it was considered that such planning was gradually being introduced by such great leaders of capitalist industry as Ford, Insull, Kreuger, Mond and so on. Capitalism was becoming "organised," as the theorists of German social-democracy explained it to be eagerly echoed by their fellow-thinkers in all countries, even by a small Right-wing group inside the Communist Party of the Soviet Union which was led by Bukharin.

This attitude of mind sees no essential difference between capitalism and socialism. Both are based upon large-scale production; both are "organised"; both; once certain

subjective difficulties are overcome (the "backwardness" of certain capitalist, the "crudeness" of those sections of the workers who utilise the strike weapon) are planned economies. The attitude, which lies at the basis of every Labour Party programme, of the whole way of thinking of the Socialist League, is perfectly summed up by Werner Sombart, the poet of capitalism, at the conclusion of his great work *Modern Capitalism*.

"We must gradually become accustomed to the thought," writes Sombart, "that the difference between stabilised and regulated capitalism and technically perfected rationalised socialism is not very great and that it is therefore more or less a matter of indifference for the fate of people and of human culture whether economy is organised capitalistically or socialistically.....What is the difference between a big co-operative universal store and a capitalist one, between a capitalist and a Communist blast furnace, a municipal or private capitalist tramway? There is no real difference. Perhaps the 'outlook' of the worker in one and the other is different. But all the conditions are the same in both cases. The duration of the working day does not depend upon the goodwill of the owner, but on the demands of national economy; in the same way the scale of wages has almost nothing to do with the economic system."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>For Sombart, as for the theoreticians of the Labour Party and the Socialist League, Socialism grows up inside of and along with capitalism in the form of "public corporations," price-fixing, market regulation etc. He foresees the future as the peaceful co-habitation of various social forms inside the national economy—capitalism socialism, peasant farming, handicrafts etc. At the same time his view of the future is full of the deepest pessimism and it is not surprising to find that the National-Socialism of Hitler is able to trace most of its economic theory to

The crash of 1929 with all its terrible consequences, taking place precisely at the moment when socialist economy in the Soviet Union began its triumphant forward march, has completely shattered this dream of the identity of the two systems, made it as devoid of reality as the content of a newspaper serial story. The crisis indeed has acted for capitalism in the way which Swift reproved for its perversity in his *Tale of a Tub*. "Last week I saw a woman flayed, and you will hardly believe how much it altered her person for the worse."

Five years of crisis have shown not only that wages and the length of the working day, but even work itself, depend very much upon the kind of social system. Five years of crisis have shown poverty, oppression, mad nationalism, economic and military war, the destruction of all culture which society can no longer "afford" or which has become "dangerous" to be the essence of one social system. It has shown industrial advance, agricultural progress, shorter hours, higher wages, no unemployment and the peaceful co-operation of peoples of many nationalities in the creation of a prosperous and cultured life, to be the essence of another. The contrast is sufficiently sharp to seem to indicate that there is a difference. Capitalism, however,

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Sombart, just as the philosopher of capitalist decay, Spengler, also draws on him for his social and economic ideas. Sombart's idealisation of the capitalist entrepreneur is the basis of the Nazi labour law with its "leaders" in each factory and industry, and from his sentimental flirtation with socialism there has arisen in fact the modern industrial serfdom of fascism. The paragraph quoted above might well be the preamble to the new programme of the Labour Party. No less certainly it is the outlook of fascism and we may well say of Sombart's theory of the "development" of capitalism that "the more it changes, the more it is the same thing".

adopts the attitude so warmly commended by Swift for those who desire peaceful possession of the mind.

"The two senses to which all objects first address themselves are the sight and the touch ; these never examine farther than the colour, the shape, the size and whatever other qualities dwell or are drawn by art upon the outward bodies ; and then comes reason officiously with tools for cutting, and opening, and mangling, and piercing, offering to demonstrate that they are not of the same consistence quite through."

But Swift was only a flippant cleric, whose books, if they were read to-day, would rightly be excluded from Public Libraries or burned by Sir Oswald Mosley's legions upon public bonfires. Capitalism is in the unfortunate position now where it has to fard itself with even the most outworn and discredited ideas to cover its own decay. Since the crisis has, above all else, compelled a consciousness of the complete anarchy of capitalist production, then that must somehow be covered up by fair words about planning.

In fact, the ever-narrowing market and growing impoverishment drive capitalism to three methods of overcoming the economic crisis. The first is to use every means to fight for a larger share of this narrowing market. Tariffs, embargoes, quotas, inflation, military preparations, are the means used. The second is to endeavour simultaneously to make each country as far as possible self-supporting. Behind the tariff walls state subsidies, price juggling, regimentation of labour with the help of trade union leaders, reorganisation of agriculture are taking place. The third method is to intensify the exploitation of labour by rationalisation, or sometimes by its opposite, the replacing of machine operations by unpaid or nominally paid hand labour, the organisation of concentration camps for the unemployed, the further degradation of the position of the farmers and peasants, the decline of agriculture.



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In the U. S. A., under the name and sign of the N. R. A., in Britain under the National Government, in Germany and Italy under the name of fascism, all these three methods are being consciously exploited and since they are applied *consciously*, capitalism feels justified in claiming that it is acting in accordance with the laws of economic planning. Yet it does not need much thought to realise that these various forms of "national" government, acting in different conditions and with different weapons, are not in fact able by such means to bring about any solution of the economic crisis which does not at the same time deepen and intensify the general crisis which is affecting the whole capitalist system.

No amount of "planning" of the Roosevelt-Hitler-MacDonald type can alter certain fundamental features of capitalism which have particularly aggravated the economic crisis and in turn affected the growth of the general crisis. They cannot affect the power of the great monopolies to maintain artificially high prices for their products while purchasing their raw materials and foodstuffs from the farmer and peasant at disastrously low prices. They cannot redistribute the ever-narrowing markets of the world in accordance with any "rational" plan (since the only reason recognised in this sphere is expressed in the power to seize or the power to hold), neither can they re-distribute the world's gold supply.

By state subsidies (in Germany and the U. S. A. state subsidies have proved, under Hitler and Roosevelt, excellent covers for the worst excesses of graft and racketeering, for the public robbery which has become such a feature of capitalism in decline) they can assist certain industries, particularly those of military importance. By exchange manipulation, by low standards of life for the workers and again by subsidies, they can win new markets through mass dumping. They can raise prices and thereby lower the standard of living.

## TWO WORLDS AT WAR

These are the limits of capitalist "planning". They have succeeded in lifting industry from the lowest point of decline reached in 1932, but they cannot hope to bring it back by such methods to the "prosperity" level of 1929. Industry working at far below capacity, permanent armies of unemployed, agriculture in decay, have clearly become permanent features of capitalism in collapse. "Planning" in consequence more and more assumes the character of planning a violent and non-economic solution to the difficulties of a dying social system. Pacifism, which the war of 1914-18 made so popular for a generation, has ceased to be fashionable. International co-operation, as the agreement of three or four of the strongest powers to rob the rest used to be called, has given way to national self-sufficiency. The World Economic Conference broke up because it could solve nothing and "plan" nothing. For the same reason the Disarmament Conference has become a shameful memory. All that remains of the era of pacifism is the odd habit acquired from long practice that every statesman before making a warlike declaration or demanding a warlike act shall declare that it is in the interests of world peace.

War has become an integral part of the capitalist system. The last relics of the democracy which developed in the period of capitalist expansion, are being taken away in state after state and rule by open terror substituted. The process is uneven. Some states are more prepared for war than others, some states are more advanced along the road to fascism than others. But every capitalist state is to-day a militarist state, every capitalist state is a state in which the ruling class is preparing to defend its property rights by any and every means. There is no other future held out to mankind by capitalism to-day than the serfdom of the fascist factory with its legalised division into "leaders" and "followers," the slave camps of the unemployed (for unpaid labour is slave labour), and finally, death on the

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battlefield. Capitalism is falling back into the life of the herd, and this decline is conditioned and made inevitable by its own internal contradictions which have now reached their climax.

### III

Unhappily, this does not mean that capitalism is thereby automatically doomed to disappear. The growth of a revolutionary crisis of the system does not imply revolution. Man has lived in conditions of complete collapse and barbarism before now for centuries at a time. "The victory of the revolution never comes by itself," Stalin told the Seventeenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. "It is necessary to prepare for it and win it. And only a strong proletarian party can prepare for it and win it. There are moments when a situation is revolutionary, the power of the bourgeoisie is shaken to its very foundation, but still the victory of the revolution does not come, since there is no revolutionary party of the proletariat present sufficiently strong and authoritative to lead the masses after it and take power into its hands."

Such a party, or the germ of such a party, for the first time in history now exists in almost every country in the world, the outcome of fifteen years' struggle and effort. Its task is to make clear to the majority of the workers that there is no issue from their present position save in the fight for Soviet power, for working-class dictatorship. They must convince the multitudes of poor farmers and peasants, ruined by capitalist oppression, that there is no future for them under the present social system, and that the mediæval Utopias of fascism in fact conceal the iron hand of the capitalist, the landlord and the banker, the modern descendants of the feudal baron.

In 1917 the Russian Communist Party was able to convince the working class and the masses of the peasantry that bread, peace and land could only be obtained through

the revolutionary establishment of soviet power. This power has proved itself to be not merely the only power in history which has given these things to the people, but also the only power capable of so refashioning human society as to guarantee to every member of society as his unalienable right, work and the fullest and freest development of his own personality. The reason for this is no deep secret. In a society which is bringing the world back to barbarism, not because of its poverty, its poor command of technique or failure to master nature, but because it is actually rotten ripe with a new society, it needs the violent action of the new class, of the proletariat, to clear the way for the birth of the new society.

The great contradiction of modern capitalism, the contradiction between social methods of production and private appropriation, cannot be solved otherwise than by the reduction, step by step, of every fortress of private property. This is only possible when the class which is most deeply interested in that destruction, the working class, has the consciousness and the power to accomplish it. The solving of this contradiction within the framework of the former Tsarist empire has deepened the contradiction on a world scale. Capitalism, with its inevitable accompaniments of unemployment and poverty, exploitation and national oppression, has disappeared for ever in the Soviet Union, giving place to a free association of socialist peoples. But the very fact that socialism has been triumphantly constructed by the creative efforts of millions of workers and peasants, the despised and "ignorant" masses who were once the subjects of Tsar Nicholas, has a hundredfold sharpened the great contradiction of the old, dying world of capitalism. In that world "it becomes evident, that the bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society, and to impose its conditions of existence upon society as an over-riding law. It is unfit to rule because it is incompetent to assure an existence to

its slave within his slavery, because it cannot help letting him sink into such a state, that it has to feed him, instead of being fed by him." The accusation of the *Communist Manifesto* has become a grim reality.

The fight for bread, for peace, for land is to-day the most immediate and urgent one before the workers, the masses of the farmers and peasantry, the "small" people, of the old world. It is the immediate slogan of humanity in its struggle for emancipation. Capitalism, understanding this, is making a last desperate effort to save itself by deceiving people into imagining that there is a "third empire," somewhere between capitalism and socialism, that by a mixture of mediæval reaction (including mediæval torture), of nationalist frenzy and disguised state serfdom for the masses, a way out can be found. The creed of fascism is, however, only an effort to decorate the robber baron who is one side of the modern big capitalist, with some motley rags of a "faith" under the guise of which he may plunder the people and maintain his serfs in subjection by armed bands of retainers, recruited from among the sturdy beggars of his own creation.

In the Reichstag Fire Trial which took place in Leipzig in 1933 these two worlds faced each other. Through the mouth of the prisoner Dimitrov, the Bulgarian compositor, the working class, the masters of the new world, accused the old, dying world of capitalist barbarity. As to who was the victor in that trial of strength, the heroic Dimitrov, who flayed the skin from his enemies with every fearless word he uttered, or Goering and Goebbels, the prophets of the "third empire" of capitalism, who, like the Æolians, "delivered all their doctrines and opinions by eruptions," no one, least of all the fascists, had any doubt. If one Communist can defy the rulers of an empire, exposing their rottenness till it stinks to the world, we need not doubt that this Communist army of working men and women will eventually succeed in leading the

majority of mankind to the overthrow of capitalism.

We may therefore draw two conclusions from these two chapters. Firstly, that when, in 1873, on the very eve of the beginning of the latest, modern phase of capitalist development, Marx wrote that: "The contradictions inherent in the movement of capitalist society are most conspicuous to the practical bourgeois in the vicissitudes of the periodic cycles to which modern industry is subject, and in the culminating point of these cycles, a universal crisis," he was, as the present proves, perfectly correct in his forecast. Secondly, the recent trial at Leipzig, in which Dimitrov appeared as the representative of all that was best and progressive in humanity against all that is vilest and most reactionary, may be taken as the symbol of the relation of class forces in that epoch of universal crisis. Communism in fact unites all that is best and most progressive in the past of humanity with the present struggle of the working class against world capitalism for the liberation of all the oppressed and the establishment of socialist, classless society.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PARTY OF THE WORKING CLASS

#### I

THE history of all hitherto existing society," says the *Communist Manifesto*, "is the history of class struggles." But it is only in conditions of capitalist society that this struggle has been organised and led by political parties. Of course, parties in a crude form existed in ancient Greece and Rome, and in mediæval Europe, but as fully organised groups of men and women, recognising common obligations, having common aims, having a programme and constitution, or at least some commonly accepted doctrine, they are the creation of capitalist society and more particularly of the last century and a half of that society.

Parties of a sharply defined form, with a clear political and class character, arose first of all in England during the revolutionary struggles against feudalism in the seventeenth century and the country which in Hobbes and Locke gave to the world the first political philosophers of modern times, gave also the first political parties in the Whigs and the Tories, just as that same English revolution gave a wealth of political thought and political experience in general which was utilised to advantage by the capitalist class in other countries in its struggle for freedom against feudalism. Capitalism in its revolutionary development created nations and nationalism, and the capitalist political parties were and are national in character, aiming at the administration of the national state by the particular

interests which they represent, and always assuming the name of "national" parties. The party of the working class on the other hand, is, and must be, international in character, the very opposite of the capitalist parties, for reasons which we shall shortly see.

Parties, then, we may define as political organisations uniting the most conscious and active members of a class. Though capitalist society is divided into two chief classes, bourgeoisie and proletariat, the number of parties is many. There is nothing mysterious in this. The capitalist class the bourgeoisie, is not a united class but is divided into many antagonistic groups and fractions owing to the struggle which takes place among the members of that class for the division of the surplus value created by the labour power of the workers. Division arises also in accordance with the different conditions of production in various spheres. Then, besides the capitalist class and the workers, there are secondary or intermediate classes and groups, the petty-bourgeoisie, the intelligentsia, and so on.

In England for over a century there were but two parties, Whigs and Tories, and later, Liberals and Conservatives. They represented at first different land-owning and trading interests and finally, fairly sharply, the industrial capitalists and the landlord-mercantile groups. Until the final triumph and stabilisation of industrialism in the generation after 1848, there was no attempt to conceal the fact that these two parties represented two different and opposing sections of the property-owning class, of the "men with a stake in the country," who took turns at representing the "nation." In other capitalist countries the historical conditions of development have been different and the nature of the bourgeois parties has been more confused, their number greater, but in general the effect has been the same, the creation of parties of the Right and of the Left, very roughly corresponding to the main party divisions in England.



In all countries, however, certain developments in the class struggle have taken place which have greatly changed the traditional character of the party fight. The development of capitalism has pressed very heavily upon the petty-bourgeoisie, particularly upon the peasantry and small producers, while the growth of capitalism into imperialism, into the rule of vast monopolies with its accompaniments of war and mass unemployment, has created intense activity among all sections of the petty-bourgeoisie. New political parties have been formed in which they have taken a leading part, parties which attack the big capitalists, which call for a reform of the worst features of capitalism, for some means of closing the huge gap opening between the classes, parties which play with the slogans of socialism and even adopt the name socialist.

Such were the English radicals led by Lloyd George, who differed not at all in policy from the majority of the leaders of the newly formed Labour Party, and the French Radical-Socialists. The parties of the old Second International became gradually permeated with this outlook, a permeation which the war hastened and completed. In England, for example, many of the most active of the old Radicals joined the Independent Labour Party or the Labour Party during and after the war. These parties became in the Imperialist epoch the typical "opposition" parties everywhere, but this did not prevent them when in power from defending the interests of the capitalist class as a whole.

The working class, however, is not divided in its interests and has no groups or fractions whose particular economic interests demand defence. The working class, by its place in production, is united in its nature and in its interests. Certainly, capitalism tries to prevent that unity finding political expression by using many stratagems for dividing the working class and setting one section against another. We have already mentioned that the super-profits derived

from monopoly allow of the granting of privileges to certain sections of the workers. Great efforts are made to divide the skilled from the unskilled worker; efforts which in Britain during the nineteenth century had remarkable success; and still do have success to a limited extent. The division between employed and unemployed is no less skilfully played upon, while national differences are also utilised. For example, it is a common practice to pay Welsh and Irish labourers lower rates than their English comrades, a practice to which the Welsh and Irish are often compelled to submit. In 1933 in one of London's dormitories, Watford, a movement of the unemployed was very cleverly split by the creation of such prejudice against its Welsh leaders.

Yet, in spite of these differences inside the working class, their place in production always in the end forces them to unity in their daily struggle for bread and work. Capitalism is only able to divide them temporarily. The most active, militant and progressive section of the working class in every country eventually unites into a revolutionary party of the workers, conscious of the ultimate aim of the workers' struggle, and attempting to organise the working class to achieve that aim. The party of the working class is that organised advanced guard which clearly sees that the class struggle must inevitably lead to a challenge of the whole property basis of capitalist society, to the storming of the fortresses of the capitalist "heaven" and the establishment of the dictatorship of the working class. The party of the working class clearly sees that this dictatorship is itself but a transition to the abolishing of all classes and to the creation of a social system in which there shall be no place for class divisions.

A workers' party must overcome those differences created by capitalism inside the working class, and not seek to maintain them. It must build the unity of the workers, which it can only do if it is itself united, if it

clearly understands its tasks both in the daily fight against oppression, and in the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, and finally in the transition to Communist society which follows. For the understanding of these tasks and for finding its way through the complicated maze of contradictions and difficulties which characterise the class struggle, it has the powerful weapon of the theory of scientific Communism created by Marx and Engels and developed in our own time by Lenin and Stalin. No army can fight without leaders, without a general staff, without organisation, without a theory of war, an understanding of strategy and tactics. These things the working class looks to its party to provide.

Such a party does not spring into the world fully grown and armed. Just as the growth of the parties of the young capitalist class was slow and difficult, beginning with a few small groups of intellectuals and revolutionary writers, so is the progress of the party of the working class. The little group of men who suffered persecution and ridicule at the hands of the ruling oligarchy in England at the close of the eighteenth century could truly claim to be the representatives of their class, even though they had not won over to their side the majority of their class. Dr. Priestley's house was burned by the mob, but in less than two generations Dr. Priestley's cause was well on the way to triumph. That triumph might have come even more rapidly and completely had the English capitalist class had the courage of its own convictions and of its early leaders.

Lenin has rightly pointed out that, "in order that the mass of a definite class may learn to understand its own interests, its condition, may learn to carry on its own policy, precisely for that reason the organisation of the advanced elements of the class is immediately necessary at whatever cost, even though at the beginning these elements should comprise a negligible proportion of that

class." Organisation, close connection with the main body of a class, a clear understanding of its interests and a fearless fight for those interests can give a party a strength and influence ten or a hundred times greater than its numerical strength. Harsh terror and persecution followed every step of the growth of the Russian Bolsheviks. In January 1917 the membership was but a little over 20,000, yet the party had won over to its side the majority of the industrial workers of the Tsar's Empire. The membership of many Communist parties to-day is more than half in jail and their leadership continually depleted by physical extermination, yet their influence over millions of workers and poor peasants grows continually.

This is not due to sympathy with persecution, it is due to the power of organisation so strong, so deeply rooted in the masses, that it cannot be destroyed. It is due to the fact that by means of such organisation the party is able to prove in practice that it has no other interests but those of the workers and village poor whom it leads, and that it alone, even in the most awful conditions of terror, will continue to fight for those interests and for the final emancipation of all the oppressed.

It is for this reason, therefore, that the Communist Party lays such emphasis upon the two questions of organisation and of unity, an emphasis so strong that it makes of the Communist Party a party of an altogether new type, a party completely different from the parties of the Labour and Socialist International. The Communist Party does not aim merely at electoral victories and knows that the peaceful growth of capitalist "democracy" into working-class dictatorship, as, for example, the Socialist League advocates, is impossible. It understands that between the daily economic battle of the workers and the political struggle against capitalism there is an unbreakable connection, that it is this economic struggle which alone rouses the workers to consciousness and understanding of

their place in society and mobilises them for the fight for their emancipation.

The basis of the Communist Party is therefore in the factories and industrial enterprises, the depots, the garages, the great shops, the streets where the workers live. The party unit is the cell in the enterprise or street whose task is to unite the most conscious and militant workers around the party, to understand and fight for their needs, to educate them politically for the fight against capitalism and to bring out all their initiative and capacity in that fight. These units are themselves connected with one another on a territorial principle, by districts and sub-districts.

The Party as a whole is organised upon the principle of democratic centralism. That is to say, all its leaders, organisers, committees, etc., are elected at conferences of the membership, but in between these conferences the membership with unswerving discipline must carry out the decisions of its authoritative leaders and committees. The supreme authority in the Party, between its national conferences, is the Central Committee, which in its turn elects a small Political Bureau and a secretariat for carrying on the day-to-day business.

The basic cells elect organisers, while conferences of the districts and sub-districts elect the district and sub-district committees, which in turn elect their bureaus and secretariats for carrying on the daily work. Policy for a long period is decided by the National conferences after a long and full discussion in the Party press and all its organisations. In such discussions the most complete freedom is allowed, freedom unheard of in any other political party, and every member is encouraged to participate. Once, however, the majority of the Party nationally has decided on a policy for the whole Party, or the majority locally or in a cell has decided on a local policy, that decision must be loyally carried out by every member, until or

unless it is changed by a higher organisation. The right of appeal against any decision exists for every member right up to the Communist International, but until the appeal is heard the member must obey the disputed decision. Discussion on questions of policy cannot be started throughout the Party on the demand of individuals or groups, but only if they are demanded by important district organisations, or if the Central Committee cannot itself arrive at a firm decision, or if a majority of the Central Committee considers a discussion essential. The workers' party, as Lenin emphasised, in his attack on the syndicalists in the Russian Party in 1921, "is not a debating club".

The vanguard of the workers can only grow and gain strength, can only really lead the working class, if it is so organised as a disciplined detachment of the working class. It cannot accept mere "sympathisers" into its ranks, but must demand of every member that he not only pay his dues but play an active part in the life of his party organisation, whatever may be the difficult or dangerous conditions under which he has to work. In this way it is able to ensure that in fact only the most active, militant and class-conscious workers remain in its ranks. The others will sooner or later drop out.

But capitalism cannot be overthrown by the vanguard alone, nor can it be the only organisation of the workers. In trade unions, co-operatives, factory committees, women's organisations, educational circles, clubs, youth societies, in all these and many more thousands of workers gather. Not only are such organisations generally non-communist, they are even openly, in many cases, under the patronage of capitalist philanthropists or even of fascists or of military officers. Yet since they unite enormous numbers of workers it is the duty of the Communists to work in them to expose their character to the members and from organisations of class co-operation turn them into organisations of class struggle. The working class has no hope of

victory unless it can forge its own unity, and it cannot hope for unity unless its own party is at work everywhere and actively creating that unity.

This is why Communists place such immense importance upon the trade unions, which unite more workers than any other organisation and in such conditions as connect them very closely with the daily struggles of those workers. A "pure" trade union policy which is concerned only with economic questions must in practice lead to co-operation between the union leaders and the employers, to the failure to fight for the daily interests of the workers save under the most extreme provocation and great pressure from below, to the loss of influence and of membership of the unions. It is the policy of the Communists to make the union branches into organisations which really defend the workers' interests, to win control of local and national organisations, and to educate the rank and file of the union membership into understanding that the power of militant organisation is the strongest weapon of the workers, but that this weapon is only really sharp when it is also political, when it is inspired with class-consciousness and used for class aims.

Many parties, indeed every party, claim to represent the interests of the working class. Tories, Fascists, Liberals, Labour, all fill their press with appeals to the workers and every one of their speakers pays some sort of lip-service to the workers, whose immense power in modern industrial society is universally recognised. But all these parties claim also to represent the interests of other classes. They seek for parliamentary majorities which will enable them to say that they represent "the nation," that is a supposed unity of all classes, and they emphatically deny that they represent one class alone. The Communist Party is the only existing political party which represents the interests of one class only and apart from the interests of that class has none of its own.

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Furthermore, unlike other classes, the working class can only have one party. If historical conditions have created various groups and parties claiming to represent the workers only, then they are bound to merge into one party if their claims are honest, and the daily practice of the class struggle is the sure touchstone of that honesty. That is why the Communist Party represents a unity of will and a unity of action of its members. Just as there can be no two parties of the workers, so there can be no groups or fractions existing inside the workers' party with programmes and platforms of their own. The fact that the working class, until the final triumph of socialism on a world scale, lives surrounded by other classes, means that these classes will try to establish their influence inside the Communist Party both before and after the revolution. They will endeavour to disrupt that Party by various policies, sometimes of an openly opportunist character, sometimes by covering them with all kinds of extraordinary "revolutionary" sentiments. The party does not allow the growth of such fractions and groups inside its ranks, considering that they represent alien influences whose aim is to split the party.

In the Soviet Union Trotsky and his followers attempted to bring about such a split, as did the Right wing at a later date. In other countries such groups have even succeeded in creating temporary splits and weakening the working class in the face of the capitalist dictatorship. The best guarantee against such tactics succeeding is the strength and consciousness of the discipline of the Party members, the extent to which they have educated themselves politically. To-day the world Communist Party is strong enough to be able to overcome all such efforts easily and painlessly. The temporary victory of Hitlerism in Germany has created a crisis throughout the Second International, involving much confusion, mass desertions and serious splits. Its effect on the world Communist



Party has been rather to strengthen than to weaken it. Only a few individuals in different countries have hesitated or deserted, while no kind of crisis has arisen among the membership. Unity of will and action has been forged in the Party.

## II

In a world riven by national hatreds and national oppression, in which the vilest forms of jingoism and militarism are being erected in all countries into a state religion, it is of the greatest importance that the working class should preserve its international character, putting the claims of class solidarity and unity of the oppressed above all others. If the very words nationalism and patriotism are the creations of the capitalist class, then so is internationalism the creation of the working class. A workers' party, while making every allowance for the peculiarities of history and tradition in each country, must of necessity be international, must have a united world leadership and be able to plan its struggle against capitalism upon a world scale.

Marx and Engels, the founders of scientific Communism, were also the founders of working-class internationalism. The Communist League, organised by them in 1846 and 1847, was the first world revolutionary party, and its manifesto, written by Marx and Engels at the end of 1847, closes with the famous words: "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries, unite!" The working-class movement was then still weak; only in England did the Chartists represent an organised army of labour, and the defeats of 1848, due largely to the hesitations of the petty-bourgeois revolutionaries, and to the direct desertion of the bourgeoisie to the camp of reaction, made it impossible for the League to continue its work.

But the idea of internationalism did not die. Above all

it was kept alive by Marx, whom 1848 had made the recognised leader of the revolutionary working class, a man dreaded by every government in Europe. The establishment and growth of capitalism, the shaking of Europe and America by war and reaction, led to the revival of the slogan of the *Communist Manifesto* and its embodiment in the new International Working Men's Association founded in 1864, of which Marx was again the inspirer and acknowledged leader. In the address of the new International written by Marx, there occur the two following paragraphs :

"That the emancipation of labour is neither a local nor a national, but a social problem, embracing all countries in which modern society exists and, depending for its solution on the concurrence, practical and theoretical, of the most advanced countries ;

"That the present revival of the working classes in the most industrious countries of Europe, while it raises a new hope, gives solemn warning against a relapse into the old errors, and calls for the immediate combination of the still disconnected movements."

The First International, as it has come to be called, was organised upon the basis of democratic centralism. That is to say, its Central Council was really a leading body, discussing the problems of each country and working out a common policy for them, unlike the Bureau of its successor, the Labour and Socialist International, which was never more than an information centre and advisory body. The task of the leadership of the First International was immensely difficult. All kinds of different views and theories existed in the various parties, from the anarchism of Bakunin or of Proudhon to the liberal trade unionism of the British section. It was not yet possible for the working class, still only in the process of becoming conscious, to create for itself that "practical and theoretical concurrence" emphasised in the address. But the whole

work of Marx and Engels in the International was directed towards creating that outlook, towards educating the membership and fighting those currents of anarchism and liberalism which threatened the movement from two sides.

The period of capitalist reconstruction of society, from 1848 to 1871, was a period of revolts, wars of national liberation and unification in Europe, and of civil war in America. It reached its climax in 1871, in the Paris Commune, the first successful rising of the working class, which for six weeks maintained a workers' dictatorship in the capital of the French Republic. The Commune was also the climax of the development of the International, which drew upon itself the universal hatred and persecution of the capitalist class.

Lenin sums up the first period and the new period which followed in these remarkable paragraphs:

"By the end of the first period (1848-1871), the period of storms and revolutions, pre-Marxian socialism *dies out*. Independent *proletarian* parties are born: the First International (1864-1872) and German social-Democracy.

"The second period (1872-1904) is distinguished from the first by its 'peaceful' character, by the absence of revolutions. The West has finished with bourgeois revolutions. The East has not yet grown up to them.

"The West enters the sphere of 'peaceful' preparations for the epoch of future reconstructions. Everywhere socialist parties proletarian in their basis are formed, which learn how to make use of bourgeois parliamentarism, to found their daily Press, their educational institutions, their trade unions, their co-operatives. Marx's teaching wins a complete victory and *spreads out*. Slowly but unwaveringly the process of recruiting and massing the forces of the proletariat, of preparing it for the coming struggles, goes forward.

"Such is the dialectic of history that the theoretical victory of Marxism compels its enemies to *reclotbe* themselves as Marxists. Internally decaying liberalism tries to survive in the form of socialist *opportunism*. They interpret the preparation of forces for great battles in the sense of renouncing those battles. The improvement in the condition of the slaves for struggle against wage slavery they explain as the sale by the slaves for a few farthings of their rights to freedom. They preach in a cowardly fashion 'social peace' (that is peace with the slave owners), the renunciation of the class struggle, etc. They find many supporters among the socialist parliamentarians, union officials of the labour movement and the 'sympathetic' intelligentsia."

So did Lenin sum up in 1913 the period of the Second international, which was formed under Engel's guidance and leadership in 1888. The coming struggles which Lenin here emphasises are those which inevitably accompany the development of capitalist society into its last stage of monopoly imperialism. They were the struggles for the socialist reconstruction of that society in the advanced capitalist countries and for national freedom in the backward and colonial countries, struggles which began with the Russian Revolution of 1905-7 and the Asiatic revolutions which followed. History itself, which since that period has been a continuous succession of wars, revolts, and national-freedom movements, shows that Lenin, basing himself so firmly on the teaching of Marx and Engels, correctly analysed the development of capitalist society.

Yet before 1914 Lenin and the Bolsheviks were practically alone in their view of the catastrophic development of capitalism. From its foundation in 1903 the Bolshevik Party fought inside the Second International against the opportunist, liberal view of capitalist development, that it was becoming so highly "organised" that war was im-

possible and socialism must come automatically. The working class of Europe and America, under the oppression of imperialism and the growing dictatorship of big capital, was moving rapidly left, a movement accelerated by the Russian Revolution in 1905. The Bolsheviki began to find allies in all countries among the Left wing of the various parties.

But these allies, the most prominent of whom were Rosa Luxemburg and the Left of the German and Polish parties, did not succeed in making their support effectual. In every country a new tendency developed, the tendency we now call Centrism, of which Karl Kautsky and Trotsky were the two most prominent representatives. The policy of the centrists was to prevent the attack upon open opportunism from developing and in the name of "unity" actually to support the liberals of the type of the German Right wing leaders, the Russian Mensheviks and the English Labour Party and Independent Labour Party. They covered their support of liberalism by various high-sounding revolutionary phrases, but in practice directed their chief efforts against the Left—particularly against the Bolsheviki, whom they called "splitters".

But Luxemburg and her friends were never able, until too late, to understand the character of the policy pursued by Kautsky, Trotsky and others, and although their revolutionary sympathies were all with the Bolsheviki, they were misled by the others' talk of "unity." Lenin, on the other hand, from the beginning saw that Kautsky's policy was much more dangerous to the working class than that of the open opportunists, and when in 1914 the Second International collapsed, its leaders in every country calling for support of their own capitalist class in the war, he called for an open break with opportunism, and particularly with its *centrist* form. "There are still people," Lenin wrote at the end of 1915, "who do not understand that the unity slogan of the old parties means 'unity' of

the proletariat with its bourgeoisie within the same nation and a *split* of the proletariat internationally." The Bolsheviks themselves had broken with all forms of opportunism, including the centrism of Trotsky, as long ago as 1903.

The Russian revolution of 1917 gave the basis at last for a complete break with opportunism *internationally* and the formation of a new International which should combine the revolutionary traditions of the First with the mass organisations of the Second. Such a split meant in fact not a split with the working class, but a first step towards splitting the working class away from the influence of the capitalist class, towards restoring the real unity destroyed by the alliance with liberalism. The creation of such an International and the winning to its side of the majority of class-conscious workers could only be accomplished by a bitter struggle not only against the open opportunists of the type of Henderson and MacDonald in England, but also by exposing and defeating the centrists who covered themselves with Left phrases.

Lenin explains why this is. "In reality, the formal adherence of the opportunists to labour parties by no means does away with the fact that objectively, they are a political detachment of the bourgeoisie, that they are transmitters of its influence, its agents in the labour movement." And again he exposes the false unity proposed by the centrists: "The opportunists (and the bourgeoisie) need the party as it exists at present, a party combining the Right and the Left wings and officially represented by Kautsky, who will reconcile everything in the world by means of smooth, 'thoroughly Marxian' phrases: Socialism and revolution in words, for the people, for the masses, for the workers.....joining the bourgeoisie in every crisis."

## III

The Communist International was formed in March 1919, in the midst of a revolutionary crisis which affected the whole world. But centrism had done its evil work already and it was the influence of the outlook of Kautsky and his fellows over the honest socialists in every country save Russia which condemned the post-war revolutionary movement to defeat. The complete collapse of the old International, the miserable and cowardly pacifism of the centrists in all countries, Trotsky in Russia, Kautsky in Germany, the leaders of the independent Labour Party in England, which attempted to conceal the full extent of this collapse, to excuse the traitors to socialism, created a very real danger that socialism would be for ever discredited among the workers. That this was not so was largely due to the heroism of little groups of individuals, Liebknecht and Luxemburg in Germany, John MacLean in Scotland, who more and more began to approach the Bolshevik attitude to the war and work to convert it into a civil war for socialism as the only salvation against the vicious nationalist reaction and the preparation of wars of "revenge" which were bound to be the sequel to 1914-1918.

The Revolution of 1917 helped these elements, whose influence was growing by leaps and bounds, to make the final break with opportunism, for it was to them the proof that the policy for which Lenin had been fighting in the international labour movement ever since 1903 was a correct one. In the great class battles which followed, in Germany, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Bulgaria, the republics of the Baltic border-lands, the newly formed and numerically weak Communist Parties performed miracles of devotion and heroism. But these great and partly spontaneous movements of revolt proved to be beyond their power to control and lead to victory. The burden of the

traditions of the old International was too heavy for the inexperienced revolutionaries who did not have the long experience of the Bolsheviks of independent leadership of the workers in the most difficult and terrible conditions of oppression.

The defeat of the post-war revolutionary movement was followed by a long and obstinate effort to transmit the experience of Bolshevism to the heart of the working classes of the capitalist countries, and particularly to their Communist Parties. This new period was passed through without the leadership of Lenin, but the example of the Communists of the Soviet Union in successfully overcoming the effects of intervention, civil war and famine, in stabilising their country and finally bringing it to the point whence they might commence the storming of the last elements of capitalism and the creation of a completely socialist society, proved of immense value to the parties of the Communist International. Though in Russia itself various oppositions, led by Trotsky and Zinoviev from the Left and by Rykov and others from the Right, attempted to restore capitalism, their attempts were utterly defeated. So also were similar attempts inside the Communist International to break the alliance of the workers in the capitalist countries with the workers in the Soviet Union which acted under similar inspiration.

It was significant that Stalin, Lenin's great successor, was able in 1928 to announce not only that the Soviet Union was going forward to the final construction of socialism, but that capitalism was about to enter a terrible period of crisis, leading inevitably to new wars and revolutions, that its period of stabilisation was reaching an end. At the Sixth Congress of the Communist International in 1928 its programme was finally adopted and it took final form as the world party of the working class, the leader of all the oppressed in the struggle against Imperialism.

• The principles of Bolshevism which inspire this pro-



gramme were those which Lenin had worked out and tested in the fires of three revolutions and which he handed as a heritage to the young revolutionary movement in 1919-21. They were: a real working-class internationalism and alliance of the workers in every country with the peoples of the East in their fight against imperialism, the stern dictatorship of the workers against the capitalists and their supporters which in itself is the highest form of democracy and leads to the establishment of socialist, classless society, the revolutionary overthrow, in alliance with the peasant masses, of the ruling classes, the strict centralisation of the Communist Parties as the essential condition for organising this overthrow and afterwards the dictatorship of the workers.

These principles became the very foundation of the life of the Communist Parties under Stalin's leadership. The coming of the crisis in 1929 and the hard fights which followed have proved that Lenin's work has been correctly carried out. The Communist International to-day unites over sixty national sections, more than two-thirds of which work in conditions of frightful terror and repression, in conditions even more terrible than those through which the Bolsheviks themselves passed. If any proof were wanted that the Communist International is alone able to organise and lead the masses in conditions of capitalist decline, of fascism and wars, it is to be found precisely in the experiences of these illegal parties.

In China the Communist Party has grown from a few score in 1921 to 420,000 to-day. Of these half are now fighting in the ranks of the Red Army in defence of the Chinese Soviets. But 84,000 Chinese Communists carry on their revolutionary work in the cities and villages of Kuomintang China, even though to be suspected of so much as sympathy to Communism here means death by the vilest tortures. In Germany an organised army of 90,000 Communist workers maintains the fight against

the Hitler terror, even though this Home of European capitalist "culture" suppresses Communism with a sadistic ferocity surpassing that of the Balkan squires and militarists. That is to say, after a year and a half of such cruel repression the German working class maintains an active fighting force over four times the size of the Bolshevik party in January 1917. In Japan the Government year after year declares it has rooted out Communism by means of mass arrests of all suspected of harbouring "dangerous thoughts." Over 7,000 Japanese Communists are in prison, but dangerous thoughts continue to find practical expression in the factories and villages, the schools and universities, the army and the navy, even among the servants of the Imperial household. In fifteen years the army of Communists outside the Soviet Union has grown to a strength of 860,000.

The middle-class critic of Communism explains this by saying that Communism has the force of a religious faith and its doctrines the power of religious dogma. It is certainly the case that the sufferings of the militant workers and peasants are as bad or worse than those of the revolutionary elements in pre-capitalist society. The primitive Christians in their fight against Roman imperialism, the peasant leaders of the Middle Ages, the Dutch and the English in their fight against feudalism, gave religious expression to their revolutionary faith.

But between the faith of a working-class revolutionary and the religious fervour of these early revolutionaries there is nothing in common. Religious struggles in the past were but concealed forms of class struggle behind which went on the stern battle of class interests. The working class, however, by its very position in society is compelled to fight for the abolition of all classes and of exploitation. The socialist reconstruction of society and the advance of production to the point where complete Communism becomes possible call for a bitter struggle

against all forms of religion and of superstition, for the fullest development of a scientific outlook in every sphere of human activity, including the social sphere.

Working-class solidarity, faith in the final victory of the workers' cause, heroism in the face of the enemy, these are not the marks of a religious faith. They arise from deep understanding of the interests of the working class, from the consciousness of the strength and ability of the new ruling class which is about to take the place of the old, from a deep hatred and contempt for the old capitalist society which has become a torment to the majority of mankind and a fetter on human progress. It is not because of the "religious" faith of Communists that Marxism cannot be destroyed. It is because the Communists express the real interests of the majority of mankind and are fighting for the only possible issue from the deadlock to which capitalism has brought them.

Stalin expressed this with his usual force and clarity at the Seventeenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union:

"They say that in certain States in the West Marxism is already destroyed. They say that it is apparently destroyed by the bourgeois-nationalist tendency called fascism. Of course, that is nonsense. Only people who do not know history can talk in such a way. Marxism is the scientific expression of the fundamental interests of the working class. In order to destroy Marxism, you must destroy the working class. But it is impossible to destroy the working class. More than eighty years have passed since Marxism entered the arena. During that period scores of bourgeois governments have tried to destroy Marxism. And what has happened? The bourgeois governments have come and gone, but Marxism has remained. Moreover, Marxism has managed to win a complete victory in one sixth part of the world, and moreover has achieved that victory in the

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very country where they considered Marxism had been finally destroyed. It cannot be considered as accidental that the country in which Marxism has been completely victorious is now the only country in the world which does not know crisis or unemployment, whilst in all other countries, including the fascist countries, crisis and unemployment have been reigning now for four years. No, comrades, that is no accident."

## CHAPTER IV

### NATIONAL AND COLONIAL QUESTIONS

CAPITALISM entered into its battle against feudalism under the banner of "equality". Yet capitalism in the course of its conquest of the world, and particularly in its latest, imperialist development, has created such inequalities as would have seemed monstrous and unnatural even to the mediæval mind, inequalities between class and class, between nation and nation. It is with the latter that we are now concerned particularly. "The characteristic feature of imperialism," Lenin told the Second Congress of the Communist International, "consists in the fact that the whole world . . . is at present divided into a large number of oppressed peoples and a negligible number of oppressing peoples at whose disposal are colossal wealth and powerful military force." Lenin added that we might consider that about seventy per cent of the world's population belonged to these oppressed peoples.

These peoples do not merely belong to the backward (in a technical and economic sense) countries of Asia, Africa, and South America. They are not confined to the inhabitants of the direct colonies of the imperialist states. Particularly since the war of 1914-1918 Imperialism has seized whole slices of territory in the most advanced regions of Europe, inhabited by people who are culturally among the most advanced in the whole world. Austria, Germany, Hungary, Galicia, the Ukraine, all these have seen thousands of their citizens and some of their richest territories given over to foreign exploitation. Certain new states were created which are little else than prison houses for their peoples of many nationalities. In such

states, of which Poland, Yugo-Slavia, and Czecho-Slovakia are the most striking examples, a privileged and dominant position is assured to one nationality at the expense of the rest.

Imperialism to-day no longer confines its colonising aspirations to Asia and Africa. German imperialism openly proclaims its intention of absorbing the Soviet Ukraine, an advanced industrial country with nearly fifty million inhabitants, for the purposes of "colonisation." The small Baltic republics are in similar danger from Germany and Poland. There is little doubt that another world war, supposing it did not lead to revolution, would lead to yet another remaking of the map of Europe in which whole states might disappear and others swell unnaturally with the booty of conquest.

Imperialism not only implies such a division of the world into "Great Powers" and "lesser breeds", it also creates a set of ideas and theories to justify such division and even tries to give them a "scientific" basis. In recent years in the U.S.A., Britain and Germany, race theories of one sort and another have been particularly prolific. Whole armies of doctors, missionaries and research workers have proved the natural inferiority of the negro to the white man, while German scientists have boldly captured Shakespeare and Jesus for the German race, and set themselves the delightful and profitable task of proving the world superiority of that race. Englishmen drink in with their mothers' milk the idea that all "coloured" peoples are "niggers" and all Latins are "dagoes", while the really "pukka" Englishman even consigns to these categories all those of his own countrymen who have not been to a public school.

Capitalist imperialism, therefore, though it has so developed the technical forces of production, so organised the world market, that the physical possibilities of bringing the nations together were never so great in all history,

and the economic necessity for their peaceful co-operation was never more urgent, has in fact divided them, sowed national intolerance, hatred and oppression on such a scale, that war or revolt are the only means of settling any serious dispute. As if in self-mockery, world imperialism has covered this witches' cauldron with the lid of the League of Nations, which itself embodies in legal form all the inequalities between oppressor and oppressed characteristic of the world of to-day.

The majority of oppressed peoples, however, live in the colonial countries, or in countries which are in a position of colonial dependence upon some imperialist power or group of powers. Capitalism, on first coming into contact with these peoples, found them living in pre-capitalist society of a patriarchal or feudal character. It destroyed the economic basis of that society, its old self-sufficiency, its localism, by dragging the African, the Indian or the Chinese forcibly into the sphere of world market relations. In most cases the result was the forcing of the peasant to cultivate one particular crop for the market, but at the same time he was not allowed to become a free agent in regard to that market, selling his goods at the prevailing world prices and purchasing what he needed for himself and his family in return.

Imperialism maintained the colonial peasant in his pre-capitalist relations, continued to exploit him by feudal means, turning his labour into forced labour and confiscating his surplus product. The ruling power has a complete control over the economic life of its colonies. Because the peasant in most cases cultivates only one crop, the great monopolies are able to fix the prices on a particularly low level while they see to it that the goods sold in the colonies are sold at particularly high prices. By these means monopoly capital is able to squeeze an extra profit above the average profit from its colonies. They are a source of super-profit.

This is possible because the ruling power in the colonies supports the reactionary landlord and money-lending native exploiters in whose grip the peasant finds himself completely. The life of the Indian peasant, for example, is dominated by the fact that he has to pay certain fixed charges each year: land tax, rent, water dues, and interest to the money-lender. These charges remain "fixed", whatever the movement of world prices, whatever catastrophes of flood and famine may afflict the cultivator. In order to pay these his whole crop is often sold to the money-lender for years ahead. He is rarely able to sell his own harvest freely on the market. It is scooped up by the middle-man, who in turn is the agent of the mill-owner or the bank. In some colonies, such as those in West Africa, it is no exaggeration to say that the whole life of the country is at the mercy of a single great trust. In other colonies, in East Africa, parts of India, in the Pacific islands, the plantation system with its virtual slavery prevails.

These pre-capitalist relations, all this burden of feudal and religious oppression, are maintained by the modern, up-to-date representative of the highest forms of capitalist production for certain very good reasons. They assure him his super-profits, they guarantee his industries a constant flow of cheap raw materials and his workers a cheap food supply (and therefore low wages), and they leave the colony open to him as a monopoly market for the sale of his goods and the investment of his surplus capital. They give him this monopoly control first, because since he is the "owner" of the colony he can bar out or seriously hamper imperialist rivals, and secondly, because their existence and forcible maintenance hinders the growth of native capitalism and of a native capitalist class.

The growth of such a class unhindered would mean rapid industrialisation and therefore the closing of markets



for his own goods. It would mean that in place of the peasant exploited by feudal means there would arise the capitalist farmer or the landlord cultivating his own estate with wage labour and modern methods. In either case, farewell super-profit and cheap raw materials. Lastly, of course, such a development would mean that the colonies must reach the semi-independent position of Australia or Canada, or else, like North America, be lost altogether.

Imperialism cannot of course entirely prevent capitalist development in the colonies. It must build motor roads, harbours and railways in order to exploit its plunder cheaply and efficiently, in order to smooth the path to the markets of the interior for its own goods, in order to keep its military dominance over the oppressed people. All this implies the creation of a certain number of industrial enterprises. Moreover, it is profitable to work up on the spot the first stages through which the raw material must pass, while the fact that a plentiful supply of cheap labour which can be exploited without restrictions is available has caused a certain growth of light industry in some colonies, particularly India. India, with its 350 millions and vast potential resources, is also the proud possessor of three steel plants, one of them a very large one.

But the industries which are allowed to develop in the colonies and dependent countries are chiefly light industries or those connected with the working up of such agrarian products as tobacco, sugar and rice. However, even this limited growth of capitalism means that in the most "backward" countries there also arises a working class, that here also capitalism sows the seeds of its own ultimate destruction, that it creates antagonisms and contradictions which spell its final doom.

It is generally argued by the supporters of imperialism both on the Right and on the Left that despite certain crudities and unpleasant features it has on the whole performed a civilising and progressive function among

these backward peoples. It has built harbours, irrigation dams, roads and railways. It has introduced the rudiments of Western science and methods of organisation. Unhappily for these apologies, the facts do not bear out this optimistic view. Leaving aside for a moment the corruption and waste attending these improvements, leaving aside the immense profits they have brought their creators, let us see their actual effect upon the people when they are introduced in colonial conditions, that is conditions of foreign oppression combined with feudal exploitation.

The overwhelming majority of the Indian people, for example, are peasants. What has been the effect upon them of 150 years of the development of "civilisation"? In the first place it is they who have paid for every foot of railroad laid, for every cubic metre of concrete in the irrigation system, for every public building erected. They have paid in addition for every soldier and policeman, for every high-salaried civil servant or business employee, who has ever entered India or been trained in India. They have paid and continue to pay for these blessings at inflated prices and inflated rates of interest. In order to pay they have sold themselves body and soul to the *bannia* and *zemindar* (money-lender and landlord) to a host of intermediaries, speculators, land-owners and robbers of every kind. The "progressive" civilisers of India and the other colonies have not abolished the luxurious feudal courts and harems of the native princes and landlords, they have not abolished the temples and mosques which no less remorselessly rob and exploit the peasants, and even the much boasted "peace" which they have introduced has made the country safe only for the foreigner and the native bourgeois or feudal lord, but for the peasant and the worker the whip, the bullet, the policeman's club, have hardly rendered life secure. The peasants who crowded the Jalianwallah Bagh at Amritsar probably,

if they escaped with their lives, were left with a somewhat jaundiced view of the Pax Britannica.

The Indian peasant has seen his holding gradually growing smaller and more impotent to support his family and himself, because this burden of parasitic oppression becomes heavier with every progress in the growth of civilisation. To-day the average holding is smaller than in the seventeenth century, under the Moghul emperors. To-day the army of the landless and the property-less has swollen to monstrous and wicked proportions. The Indian Census lists 31,480,000 human beings under the euphemistic head of "agricultural labourers." Nearly eleven million Indians are employed in "domestic service". He sees the super-profits which have been squeezed from his exhausting and hopeless labour return to the country, not in the shape of agricultural relief, not in the form of the productive development of the immense resources of his country, of schools and medical services, but in the armoured cars and tanks which menacingly pass through his villages when in despair he has burned the *bannia's* records or the landlord's manor house; he sees them drone fiercely over his head in the shape of great bombing planes, the modern angels of pacification.

For health and education, particularly, he is deeply grateful and refers the apostles of progress to the hymn in praise of the Indian pastoral life embodied in the report of the Director of the Indian Medical Service, Major-General Sir John Megaw. This modern Theocritus laments for his shepherds not in sweet measures but in cold figures, and succeeds thereby in arousing not merely emotion but also thought. It appears that almost one child dies out of every four born, while in the United Provinces (a paradise for the *zemindar*) almost one in every three dies. Sir John estimates that only 39 per cent of the population are well-nourished, 41 per cent are poorly nourished and 20 per cent are very badly nourished. In this land which produces

such a super-abundance of rice and wheat and sugar for the world, in nearly 40 per cent of the villages the population is excessive in relation to food supply. In some provinces this proportion is as high as 60 per cent. Every year from 50 to 100 million people suffer from malaria (a terrible disease which science is quite capable of stamping out when it is necessary for the health and comfort of a ruling race, as in Panama). Periods of famine occur as a normal rule in one village out of five.

In this period of economic crisis the peasant has seen his land fall more and more into the hands of the rapacious army of intermediaries. While prices have fallen disastrously on his produce, the price of the imported goods which he must buy has fallen to nothing like the same extent. Imperialism, by clever manipulation of the exchange, by tying the rupee to the pound sterling has gradually hastened the process of draining away his accumulated savings of gold and silver, the peasants' insurance fund against famine and disaster.

The condition of the worker is as terrible. His wages are low, his hours long, child and female labour is widespread, there is almost no factory inspection, the laws on workmen's compensation are not applied, there is neither poor relief nor unemployment insurance. His housing, if he is not compelled to sleep on the street, as many thousands do, is in the form of barracks or a corner in an unventilated and insanitary hovel. In Cawnpore, a great industrial centre, the Whitley Commission found three-quarters of the whole town unfit for human habitation. "The workers' diet is unsatisfactory from many points of view," admitted the same learned philanthropists, and went on to point out that this people of vegetarians cannot afford milk, vegetables, fruit or pure vegetable oil. Perhaps the Commissioners' emotions had mastered their reason when they employed the word "unsatisfactory". The reader will no doubt find a more *satisfactory* word. The con-

ditions of the Indian worker are those of the Chinese worker, the South American worker, the negro worker, of all who suffer from that particularly reactionary, vile form which colonial capitalism assumes. The colonial worker, by the very conditions of his life, must fight or die. Moreover, he is able to see at once that his fight is not only against the foreign imperialist but also against the native capitalist. Whatever the differences, and they are many and serious, between the native capitalist and the foreigner, the worker cannot but remark that they are united when it comes to oppressing him. He soon finds out from experience that he is strong enough to defeat his native oppressor and that it is only the support the latter receives from the imperialist which gives him serious importance.

Imperialism, by penetrating deeply into the East, has roused up countless millions of peasants, workers, ruined artisans and revolutionary intelligentsia. It has driven them from their subjection to Oriental mysticism and passivity into an active battle for life, made them one of the most important political factors in the modern world. At first their awakening was led by their native capitalists and progressive landlords. This was natural enough, for in these countries the immediate tasks of the revolution are the same as those of progressive capitalism in the nineteenth century, national unification, the sweeping away of feudal rubbish and clerical reaction. From 1907 to 1912 such movements began in India, China, Persia and Turkey, rousing millions to political consciousness for the first time. But in every case the native bourgeoisie proved incapable of leading them to victory. The war of 1914-18, which affected these countries particularly deeply, started a fresh wave of revolution.

The characteristic of this phase of the revolution was that, except in Turkey, where conditions were peculiar, and to a lesser extent also in Persia, the native nationalist bourgeoisie deserted the revolution and compromised with

imperialism, leaving the masses to fight alone. In China in 1927 they allied themselves with imperialism to make a direct counter-revolutionary onslaught on the workers and the peasant masses. The reason is not far to seek. Where there is an organised and revolutionary working class, able to rouse and lead the peasantry, particularly the poor and landless sections, the very existence of native capitalism becomes threatened, for it is deeply bound up with the whole landlord, money-lending, feudal structure. The class which in Europe was the banner-bearer of democracy, in the colonies and dependent countries can only make play with the shadows of the great revolutionary democratic acts of youthful capitalism. It can talk of Mill and liberty, of economic freedom and of modern progress, but these are only the trappings which hide a craven fear of any development of freedom, however limited, which would seriously menace the whole reactionary structure of colonial capitalism. So the political parties of these gentlemen, the Congress Party in India, the Kuomintang in China, are in fact but little caucuses of landlords, factory-owners, lawyers and militarists, caricatures of the democratic parties which arose in Europe to fight feudalism between 1830 and 1848. Moreover, as the unbearable exploitation of the masses continually sharpens the class struggle, these very caricatures become helpless tools in the hands of the imperialists, a part of the whole police and military terror against the workers and peasants.

The working class alone, by its position in society, is able to rouse, organise and lead the peasant masses against the capitalist and landlord forces of counter-revolution, against foreign imperialism. The democratic refashioning of these great countries can only be carried through by a revolutionary and democratic dictatorship of the working class and peasantry. The union of the peasant war which smoulders under the surface in the colonies (in China it

has broken into flame) with the labour movement is the guarantee of the victory of such a revolution. Such a revolutionary government must of necessity be a Soviet government, a government of the widest masses of the peasantry, the town and village poor, the revolutionary intelligentsia, under the leadership of the working class and its Communist Party.

The breaking of the old feudal-religious fetters, the distribution of the land among the peasantry, the creation of a wide co-operative movement which should also embrace the artisans, the organisation of the working class and the guaranteeing of proper wages, housing and social insurance, finally the achievement of national freedom by the expulsion of the imperialists and the confiscation of their property, such is the programme of the Soviet power in colonial and dependent countries. But here a problem at once arises. Clearly such a government is not a socialist one, nor is socialism immediately possible in such vast agrarian countries. Is it not inevitable that such countries, where the vast majority of the population are small proprietors, should pass first through the long stage of normal capitalist development?

In the speech quoted above, Lenin answers this question. "If the revolutionary and victorious proletariat carries on among them a systematic propaganda, while the Soviet governments come to their aid with all the means at their disposal, then it is incorrect to suppose that the capitalist stage of development is inevitable for the backward peoples. In all the colonies and backward countries we must not only form independent cadres of fighters, party organisations, not only carry on propaganda for the organisation of peasant Soviets and strive to adapt them to pre-capitalist conditions, but the Communist International must establish and give theoretical foundation to the point of view that with the help of the working class of the more advanced countries the backward countries can reach the

Soviet system and, through definite stages of development, Communism also, avoiding the capitalist stage of development."

It is one of the commonest arguments of the reformist socialist that such countries do not have the necessary "civilisation" to enable them to reach socialism, and that they must therefore first pass through a period of capitalist development. In other words, capitalism alone, they argue, is capable of developing their productive forces, but of course, an "enlightened" and "controlled" capitalism. Lenin rejected such arguments with scorn. In modern conditions of imperialism, with the division of the world into oppressed and oppressing nations, the former can only civilise themselves by revolutionary action, by the establishment of a firm Soviet power under the leadership of the working class, which shall then proceed to create all those material premises for civilised existence which shall bring these peoples to the level of advanced countries.

The example of China is showing in practice how right Lenin was. The Kuomintang government of capitalists, landlords and generals dreams of industrialising China with the help of the imperialist powers. In fact they are reducing the country to chaos, driving the masses to extremes of suffering and misery, and handing over China to division among these same imperialists. But the struggle of the Chinese workers and peasants has already led to the establishment of Soviet power over a quarter of the territory of China, with the support of eighty million people. It is universally recognised, even by its bitterest enemies, that this is the only stable government in the country, the only one where the life of the people is secure, the burden of taxation bearable and the collection organised in a humane and disciplined fashion, where the budget is balanced and the authority of the government firm because it has the respect and affection of the masses.

It is not perhaps widely realised that this government



has completely destroyed feudalism within its borders, that it has carried through a great land reform in the interests of the middle and poor peasants, organised thousands of schools, started producers' and consumers' co-operatives, emancipated the women, introduced the eight-hour day, developed a popular Press and organised for the defence of its territories the most formidable and disciplined fighting force in China. In the Soviet regions wages and the income of the peasants have risen and food prices, despite the blockade, have fallen. The reason of this is that the productivity of the farms, in secure conditions, is steadily rising.

The Red Army, with over 400,000 rifles, has over forty per cent of literacy, something unheard of and undreamed of in Kuomintang China. Nearly half of its rank and file and three-quarters of its commanding ranks are Communists. It has behind it a militia of many hundred thousands, partly armed with rifles, partly with more primitive weapons. It is the representative and defender of a real popular power which is leading millions towards civilisation, a civilisation they will create by their own efforts, with the help of the world working class.

In such circumstances it will be possible to reach socialism by evolutionary means, without a further revolution. This is the only exception in which such a peaceful development becomes possible. The leadership of the Chinese Communists, who have grown from a few score workers and intellectuals in 1921 to a great party 420,000 strong, of whom over 80,000 are at work in the terror-ruled provinces of Kuomintang China and Manchuria, is the guarantee of this.

It is impossible to ignore these liberation movements of the colonial and dependent peoples. It is also equally impossible to ignore the oppressed national minorities in the European states. A working class struggling for freedom has clearly no hope of success unless it is able to stand

forward as the leader of all the oppressed. Marx was not expressing a mere pious sentiment when he declared, in relation to the attitude of the British workers to the Fenians in Ireland, that "no nation can be free which oppresses another." Capitalism draws immense financial and industrial strength from its oppression of subject peoples. It is also able to feed all its most reactionary impulses, to give the ruling class a first-class training in civil war against its own workers at home. It is no accident that German fascism has nourished itself on race theories and mad nationalism. It is no accident that British fascism is pre-eminently a colonial fascism, seeking to base its appeal on the "Empire".

The working class can only win its own struggle by opposing all forms of jingoism and nationalist oppression with its own working-class internationalism, at whose very basis lies complete freedom of development for every nationality and every national minority, *however small*. The Russian working class were only able to defeat the counter-revolution and the intervention because they had the confidence and sympathy of the numerous national minorities in the rear of the hostile armies. In the very first days after the working class seized power in November 1917 a "Declaration of Rights of the Peoples of Russia" was issued by the new Soviet government guaranteeing the equality and sovereignty of all the peoples of Russia, freedom of self-determination, including the right of complete separation, the abolition of all privileges and restrictions and free development to every national minority or ethnographical group.

Under the leadership of the working class the former national minorities have in fact succeeded in developing the resources of their countries and their national culture in such a way as to avoid the hell of capitalist exploitation and to advance towards socialism. The growth of industry, the building of roads, railways and irrigation works, the

supplying of electric power, all without the terrible burden of inflated interest rates upon the loans of foreign finance-capital, have marked the progress of these new nations.

Stalin, whose name will always be associated with this work of liberation, rightly pointed out that "in order to reunite partitioned Poland, the bourgeoisie had to enter upon a series of wars. In order to reunite disintegrated Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, the Communists needed only a few months of explanatory propaganda." The Soviet revolution has not only made possible the equal and fraternal co-operation of peoples of different race and nationality, it has also awakened dying peoples to new life, brought a renaissance of culture to old nationalities which for centuries had given nothing to the human store. It has enabled men and women to take an active interest in life who would otherwise perhaps never have risen even as high as the missionaries' Bible, though they might have died clutching the traders' bottle of spirits. Prophetically Stalin has pointed out that "it is customary to speak of India as a homogeneous whole. Yet, when the revolution breaks out in Hindustan, there can hardly be any doubt that hitherto ignored nationalities will burst upon the scene, each with its own distinctive language, its own distinctive culture. And if it is a matter of the joining of the different nationalities in a proletarian culture, then there can hardly be any doubt that this joining will take place in forms which correspond to the language and life of these nationalities." In Soviet China to-day there are scores of such language groups and nationalities, hitherto entirely ignored by the Western sinologists, which are first coming to life in this way.

It may seem that here is a contradiction. Indeed the "theorists" of the Second International have always considered the claims of such small groups and peoples to be a hindrance and menace to the growth of internationalism. They have always preached that the "World

State" will speak one of the world's chief languages—French or German, or, in recent years, "Basic English." Yet it is not difficult to see that a power which is in fact and not in name a popular power, such as is the Soviet power, that a task which demands the fullest creative effort from every citizen, such as is the task of building a socialist society, can only be understood if this power and this task are expressed in the language and in the manner to which those to whom they appeal are accustomed. If an Englishman were to explain the most wonderful ideas and plans to a Bantu-speaking African he would get no response if he used the English language, however basic.

Socialist culture, towards which humanity is advancing, not only does not deny national culture, but it presupposes it and fosters it. Socialist culture, even for a long time after socialism has triumphed throughout the world, will remain national in form, though its content will naturally be socialist. But this will not of course always remain the case. As Communism develops, as the productive forces of the world increase to an extent undreamed of to-day and the peoples of the world reach a common level of life, as they co-operate even more closely in their daily work, a new stage of universal culture and language, of merging of the peoples, will come. "We must let the national cultures develop and expand," says Stalin, "and reveal all their potential qualities, in order to create the necessary conditions for merging them into one common culture with one common tongue."

This is the answer of Communism to those who say that the character of this or that people is temperamentally unfitted for the reception of Communism. The Indian, of course, must always be fitted by nature and temperament to a life of privation and suffering and with Oriental stoicism will ever welcome a cruel death from his rulers when a momentary sickness of mind drives him to protest

against accepting what his better nature has hitherto dictated to him. The French peasant must always love the smell of dung and the Englishman be offended in his national pride if it is suggested that he resents unemployment. Unluckily for those who cherish such illusions, relentless history proves the opposite to be the truth. Now that the "undiscovered country" has been found, now that the veils of cant and superstition are being rent one by one from the face of society by rough working-class hands, the doubts of Hamlet are answered and "*none* would fardels bear, to grunt and sweat under a weary life."

## CHAPTER V

### WORLD COMMUNISM—THE ULTIMATE AIM

WE have seen that all human history has been the history of struggles between classes, that is to say, between groups of persons occupying definite places in the process of production, having definite production relations one with another. As productive forces develop they change these relations, create new classes and destroy old ones. When productive forces (which consist of three elements, the instruments of labour, the object of labour and human labour power) no longer correspond to the production relations, when the latter cease to develop and enter into conflict with the former, then a violent conflict takes place, the issue of which is a new form of production relations corresponding to the development of productive forces.

In modern society, the productive relations are considerably simplified and the class struggle is chiefly waged between the two main classes of bourgeoisie and proletariat, capitalist and worker. That modern society has reached the stage when productive forces have outgrown the old forms of production, when the productive relations have entered into sharp conflict with them, is seen from the almost complete breakdown of capitalism in the sphere of relations of distribution. Not only is capitalism no longer able to maintain its wage slaves, it is also driving into ruin, famine and disease millions of small producers in its colonies and dependencies. So sharp is the conflict, so violent the antagonisms between classes, that society is living in a state of open civil war. On the day upon

which these lines are written the newspapers contain news of civil war in Austria, of a general strike in France, of a hunger march upon London by two thousand unemployed workers, of strikes and revolutionary movements in Spain, of a revolutionary demonstration by Oxford students, of mass executions in Bulgaria, of arrests and executions in India<sup>1</sup>.

Karl Marx, whose analysis of society showed that capitalism was bound to reach such a stage of collapse, summed up the chief points in his own teaching as follows:

“(1) That the existence of classes is only connected with definite historical forms of the struggle of developing production;

“(2) That the class struggle inevitably leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat;

“(3) That this dictatorship is itself only a transition to the abolishing of all classes and to the establishment of a social system in which there shall be no place for class divisions.”

In the former Russian Empire the class struggle has already led to the dictatorship of the proletariat and that dictatorship has shown in practice that it is a transition to the establishment of a classless society. In China workers' and peasants' Soviets are already preparing the way for the moment when it will be possible to unite the whole country under a workers' dictatorship and commence the transition to socialism. The idea of Soviet power is daily becoming more conscious among the workers of the whole world, a guarantee that Marx was not mistaken in his view that the class struggle must inevitably lead to proletariat dictatorship. But Communist society is meaningless unless it is able to become a world society, the revolutionary struggle of the workers hopeless, unless it can eventually conquer on a world scale.

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<sup>1</sup>February 13th, 1934.

What is the guarantee that this is not only possible, but certain? It lies in the fact that capitalism in its last, imperialist stage, rouses up in opposition to itself not only the working class of the most advanced, industrialised countries but also the many million mass of oppressed peasantry in the backward countries. It lies in the fact that the first workers' dictatorship has arisen in a vast and rich area lying on the border between these backward countries and the advanced states of the West. It lies in the fact that the working class of this country has succeeded in converting it from an economically backward country into one of the world's most advanced industrial countries and has led a great peasant population away from the wretched deadlock of private property to socialist, mechanised farming. Lenin, in the last words which he ever wrote, summed up these conditions of final victory as follows:

"The issue of the struggle in the last resort depends upon the fact that Russia, India China, etc., comprise the immense majority of the world's population. But it is precisely this majority of the population which during the last year has been drawn with unusual rapidity into the struggle for its own emancipation, so that in this sense there cannot be a shadow of doubt as to what will be the final decision of the world struggle. In this sense the final victory of socialism is completely and unconditionally guaranteed."

When capitalism everywhere is overthrown, when the working class is everywhere in power, for what aim will that power be used? What is to be the future society of the human race?

Is the working class merely seeking to eternalise its own power, to destroy capitalism but to live at the expense of other classes, such as the peasantry?

No, the working class, as the name of its party implies, fights for Communism. It wins power in order to guar-



antee the victory first of socialism, and then of complete Communism. Under world Communism class society, the anarchy of production which characterises capitalism, the degradation and waste of life which arise from exploitation of man by man, nation by nation, will have been abolished for ever. Mankind will look back with shame and horror upon the society of the past, with its coercion, its poverty, its blinding of humanity, its deliberate cultivation of the vilest passions on the one hand, and its fettering of human nature and human understanding on the other. The dying out of classes and the disappearance of private property will eventually inevitably bring in their train the dying away of the State, of all forms of class domination. The rule over men will be replaced by the administration of things, mankind will pass into the adult stage of his history, into the world commonwealth of labour.

Freed from the fetters of private property relations, the forces of production in Communist society will develop at a rate so rapid as to constitute a great leap forward in history. Above all, the development of human labour power will perhaps prove to be the most important feature of this growth of the productive forces of society. Communist society must depend upon the fullest flowering of the initiative and individuality of every one of its members. Such a many-sided, *complete* development is impossible in general in class society, where only a handful of millionaires, ministers and war lords have any opportunity for full self-expression, though in their case the kind of self expressed is naturally enough to a large degree conditioned by the most repulsive features of the society in which they rule. In class society, save in the rare periods of revolutionary reconstruction, of renaissance, the best human beings are liable to become entangled in the terrible network of contradictions in which they live and their life becomes a torment of doubts and frustrated desires.

Such a complete, many-sided development becomes possible because the growth in the forces of production allows social economy to be constructed upon the basis of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." Marx summed up the characteristics of Communist society in the Gotha Programme so concisely that there would be no point in paraphrasing them. "In the higher phase of Communist society," he wrote, "when the enslaving subordination of individualism in the division of labour has disappeared, and with it also the antagonism between mental and physical labour; when labour has become not only a means of living, but itself the first necessity of life; when along with the all-round development of individuals, the productive forces too have grown, and all the springs of social wealth are flowing more freely—it is only at that stage that it will be possible to pass completely beyond the narrow horizon of bourgeois rights, and for society to inscribe on its banners: 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.'"

The present development of technique, accompanied though it is in capitalist society only by unemployment and poverty is nevertheless such as to enable us to see that the factory of the future will be merely the practical department of the scientific laboratory. Most of the dirty and degrading labour in the world could even now be abolished. While capitalism, in its death-throes, dreams of re-establishing the mediæval squire in his manor as a last ally against the coming revolution, Communism would make agriculture merely a variation of industry. Electrification, modern methods of cultivation and stock-breeding, once the basis of private property is smashed, would destroy the stupidity of rural life, the age-old opposition of town and country. The great city, the octopus of modern life, would disappear no less completely. Great areas of the most beautiful and interesting parts of the world would be preserved as natural parks for the health and recreation of

humanity, parks which, with the development of transport, would become easily accessible to all.

So long as capitalism exists there will be preventable disease, madness, prostitution, crime; people will continue to exist and suffocate in their own filth; modern transport will slaughter more people in a year than did the great wars of the French Revolution; the rulers of the greatest empire in the world will each day note with self-satisfaction that they are unable to manage the traffic of their capital city, to house and feed their citizens, or to work their enormous productive apparatus at full capacity. They will declare that the cause of war is love of peace and therefore pile up enormous resources in the means of destruction of human life.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps two concrete examples will suffice of the kind of work which will be undertaken by a world Communist society, and which only such a society could undertake, even though technically such undertakings have been possible for the last twenty years. The experience already gathered in the construction of socialist society in the Soviet Union, in the building of such enterprises as the Dnieper dam and the new great project of the Volga chain of hydro-electrical stations is more than sufficient for us to be able to formulate with some exactness how the world would be transferred by a Communist society.

As far back as 1922 Lenin was discussing with comrades the possibility of presenting to the Genoa Conference a proposal for building an electrified super trunk-line from London to Peking, passing through most of the important European capitals. This line was to have been part of a gigantic plan for the electrification of all Eurasia and would have brought bread and work to many millions of people ruined by the war. Instead, of course, Genoa became the

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Winston Churchill at Portsmouth, February 15th, 1934, for this last statement.

scene of an attempt to enforce colonisation of socialist Russia by imperialist Europe, and the project was never put forward for discussion. The victory of the Chinese Soviets on the one hand, and of the German revolution on the other, will be necessary before this plan can be brought to life.

A German engineer (no doubt he is now in a concentration camp as a dangerous "Marxist") has worked out a plan for utilising the Straits of Gibraltar for the generation of electrical power. The plan is an elaborate one, involving, in its final details the construction of dams at both the Gibraltar Straits and the Dardanelles, the building of enormous power stations as the level of the Mediterranean falls, and the practical uniting of the continents of Europe and Africa. If this plan were realised the Adriatic would disappear, all the Mediterranean countries would increase their territories by vast areas of fertile land in the most temperate climate in the world. The Rhine, the Po and the Nile would become sources of immense energy. The "darkness" of Africa would pass into the legendary history of mankind. Such an enterprise would take perhaps two generations to complete, but a socialist Europe would not only not hesitate before it (obviously in a capitalist world it is a fantastic dream), it would even be compelled to undertake and complete it.

Clearly such developments are essential before mankind can realise the slogan of "from each according to ability, to each according to his needs." In the course of such great works human beings would change and grow, as the nature they must struggle with will change and grow. New forms of labour, a new attitude towards work, would become second nature.

A few years ago it was the fashion, even among "socialist" intellectuals to believe that socialism was only a dream, that at best we might hope for a more "efficient" and "just" social system than the present, which, however,

would in its fundamentals remain unchanged. The working class of the Soviet Union has shown that the intellectuals are in fact the "dreamers" and socialist, classless society is a reality. Recognising this, the intellectuals retreat to their next line of defence. A "crude" form of socialism is certainly in being, but of course the higher, Communist stage of this society is again merely an amusing propaganda slogan of the tiresome Bolsheviks.

However, the most tiresome of all bolshevik habits is that of keeping their word, or rather of seeing to it that there is no gap between word and deed. Lenin answered as follows the doubters who sneer at the possibility of complete Communism:

"The State will be able to wither away completely when society has realised the rule: 'From each according to his ability; to each according to his needs,' i.e., when people have become accustomed to observe the fundamental rules of social life, and their labour is so productive, that they voluntarily work according to their ability. 'The narrow horizon of bourgeois rights', which compels one to calculate, with the hard-heartedness of a Shylock, whether he has not worked half an hour more than another, whether he is not getting less pay than another—this narrow horizon will then be left behind. There will then be no need for any exact calculation by society of the quantity of products to be distributed to each of its members; each will take freely 'according to his needs.'

"From the bourgeois point of view, it is easy to declare such a social order 'a pure Utopia' and to sneer at the Socialists for promising each the right to receive from society, without any control of the labour of the individual citizen, any quantity of truffles, automobiles, pianos, etc. Even now, most bourgeois 'savants' deliver themselves of such sneers, thereby displaying at once their ignorance and their self-seeking defence of capitalism.

"Ignorance—for it has never entered the head of any Socialist to 'promise' that the highest phase of Communism will arrive; while the great Socialists, in *foreseeing* its arrival, presupposed both a productivity of labour unlike the present and a person not like the present man in the street, capable of spoiling, without reflection . . . the stores of social wealth, and of demanding the impossible.

"Until the 'higher' phase of Communism arrives, the Socialists demand the *strictest* control, by *society* and by the *State*, of the quantity of labour and the quantity of consumption; only this control must *start* with the expropriation of the capitalists, with the control of the workers over the capitalists, and must be carried out, not by a state of bureaucrats, but by a state of *armed workers*."

Socialism, therefore, is the first stage of such a Communist society, in which private property in the means of production and distribution is destroyed, and consequently class divisions and the exploitation of human labour power. Socialist society is at the same time a great school for the re-education of liberated humanity, a process of fitting human beings to take their place as conscious builders of Communism. Socialism, organising humanity for labour in higher and freer forms than are possible under capitalism, is able to develop all the forces of production to a point where the transition to Communism becomes possible and inevitable.

Complete Communism is still a long way off, but socialist society, in which the seeds of the future society are ripening, is no longer a mere slogan or a dream, but a practical reality. Very soon after the socialist revolution had become victorious in the former empire of the Tsars, Lenin wrote that "if Russia is covered with a thick network of electrical stations and powerful technical equipments, then our Communist economy will become an example for the coming socialist Europe and Asia."

It used to be considered that it was impossible for socialism to come save as the result of a simultaneous revolution in several of the most advanced capitalist countries. Lenin always combated such an idea as being utterly out of accord with the realities of modern imperialist capitalism. The very powerful development and centralism of capitalist dictatorship behind the cover of parliamentary "democracy," the ruthless and efficient military machine at its disposal, made it unlikely that the workers of the most advanced countries would be the first to break through, however theoretically advisable that might be. The whole development of capitalism, moreover, is uneven to the last degree, not only as between different countries, but within each country, within each branch of industry, even as between the level of consciousness of the working class and their preparedness for struggle. From this Lenin drew the conclusion that it is impossible for socialism to be victorious in all countries simultaneously. It must first be victorious in one or a few countries, and these not necessarily the most advanced, but rather the weaker links in the capitalist chain.

In the country in which the working class first seizes power, Lenin wrote in 1915, "the victorious proletariat . . . having expropriated the capitalists of this country and organised socialist production at home, would stand against the rest of world, the capitalist world, attracting the oppressed classes of other countries, raising among them revolts against the capitalists, in case of necessity even launching armed forces against the exploiting classes and their states."

The idea that not only is it possible to build socialism in one country, but that its successful accomplishment changes the whole relation of world forces, undermining and further weakening capitalism, has lain and still lies at the basis of the whole policy of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and of the Communist International.

Lenin never tired of emphasising, that since the victory of the Russian working class, the whole future of the world revolution is bound up with the course of socialist construction in the Soviet republics. Socialism grows directly and inevitably out of capitalism, but it is itself a higher form of productive and social organisation, as much in advance of capitalism as capitalism was an advance on feudalism. The complete construction of socialism in a country with the vast resources and population of Russia, cannot therefore mean anything but a tremendous increase in the strength of the world working class, giving it an invincible and powerful base for its onslaught on capitalism.

Lenin, developing Marx's teaching that the development of the class struggle inevitably leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat, knew that there could be no other way of constructing socialism save through class struggle, that no other force save the working class was capable of reshaping the whole economy of the country so that it should be "impossible for any bourgeoisie to grow up." Only a relentless war, *after the revolution*, against the relics of the defeated classes and their allies, rooting up the very last remnants of resistance, can finally clear the way for the abolition of classes and of the habits of mind and action engendered by the old society. Such a struggle must be a dual one consisting partly of repression of active resistance or sabotage and partly of re-education.

The working class, therefore, in order to build socialism, must use as its chief weapon its class dictatorship, its position of complete supremacy in the state. The Communist Party, uniting all the most conscious and active forces of the working class, must maintain its position of leader, of a general staff in the new phase of revolutionary reconstruction of society, able to point out at any given moment what are the chief tasks and the means of solving them. But the dictatorship of the proletariat is not the dictator-



ship of a party. The chief task of the Party is to draw the whole working population of the country into the task of administration by means of the Soviets, to organise millions of workers into becoming active participators in the construction of socialist industry and agriculture by means of the trade unions, which Lenin called "a school for Communism".

The capture of power by the workers, its use in order to smash the old bureaucratic state machine, to replace it by a State in which the courts are controlled by the workers and justice is administered in their interest, in which revolutionary law becomes a weapon with which to fight for a new society, in order to draw millions of men and women into the great task of accounting and control of the property of the State, in order to place the printing-presses, cinemas and theatres at the disposition of the workers, these are the first tasks of the workers' government.

Only then is it possible to start upon the long and difficult task of uprooting the capitalist elements in the country, to bring the small producers upon the path of socialist, co-operative production, build up a socialist trading system, abolish the parasitic elements which eat away the national income, the elements living on capitalist rent, interest and profit. Then, having industry and transport, banking and distribution, firmly in its hands, the working class is able to abolish finally the contradictions and anarchy characteristic of capitalist production and proceed to the complete planning of agriculture and industry.

The end of capitalist exploitation means that the condition of the masses must improve by leaps and bounds, that far from there being any question of over-production and of unemployment, a shortage of labour and a shortage of goods have to be reckoned with and overcome. The release of millions of people from wage slavery means a

great increase in the demands and needs of the people. It becomes possible, as in the Second Five-Year Plan, to arrange for an increase of consumption of from two and a half to three times for the whole population.

It is frequently forgotten, no doubt with deliberation, that in the Soviet Union, where no differences between race or nation are recognised, the Samoyed or the nomad Kirghiz is considered to have as much right to the elements of civilised life as the worker of Leningrad or Moscow. The revolution has brought a higher standard of life to many millions of people who in 1917 were living in conditions no better than those of the mass of the people in British India. If it is true that the *average* level of life in the Soviet Union was not as high in 1933 as that of the small body of British *skilled* workers, it was infinitely higher than the average level of life for the British Empire, which would be the only fair comparison. Moreover there is plenty of justification for assuming that at present, in 1934, the *average* level of life is as good or better than that of the German *skilled* worker, and that very soon it will probably be among the highest in the world. Had the revolution been confined to Great Russia, no doubt that level would have been reached long ago. In fact it has affected not a country but a continent, and many nations of vastly differing levels of culture.

Considered from any point of view, however, the purely material gains of the revolution are enormous. The fact that the working class in Russia have used their victory in order to overcome the forces of capitalism in the country, in order to ensure that the entire product of social labour shall be socially distributed, has meant a rise in the general well-being of the country unprecedented in human history. But more than that, it has meant that certain features of this improvement in the life of the people are of such a character as to make it perfectly clear that here we are dealing with differences which are

*qualitative* and not merely of quantity. The abolition of unemployment, the nightmare of modern life, the ending of agrarian poverty by which the future of the peasant has been made, through the collective farms, as secure as that of the town workers, are perhaps the two most revolutionary of such changes.

Yet there are others hardly less striking. The *Daily Telegraph* of February 28th, 1934, prints a telegram from Bombay announcing the protest of the local branch of the Bombay Medical Association against the immigration into India of forty German doctors, on the grounds that this will swell "medical unemployment in India". "Medical unemployment" in a country where in some years 100,000,000 people suffer from malaria, where at the time of writing the Government has just appointed a famine relief commission in the province of Bihar! In the Soviet Union, millions of whose citizens live within a day's rail journey of India, the amount spent annually on social insurance alone, which includes medical care of a variety of kinds, is greater than the total national budget of many leading European States. The thoughtful who ponder over this comparison can hardly fail to conclude that there is a difference of *quality*, that here is a difference arising from a *higher form of society*.

The fact that in the Soviet Union wages are paid and some people receive higher wages than others, is in fact no contradiction to this. The higher, Communist society, is not something which comes ready-made. It is already implicit in capitalist society itself, but it is born out of that society, still bearing all the marks of its origin, and it is created, moreover, by people brought up in that society. The first, socialist phase of Communism cannot produce that justice and equality, that complete equilibrium between the individual and society, towards which mankind is evolving. "Justice," writes Marx in the Gotha Programme, "can never rise superior to the economic conditions of so-

ciety and the cultural development conditioned by them.”

The socialist revolution has destroyed for ever the great “injustice” which consists in the ownership of the means of production and the plundering of society by a few individuals, but it has not destroyed and cannot destroy at once “the further injustice consisting in the distribution of the articles of consumption ‘according to work performed’ (and not according to need).”<sup>1</sup> So it comes about that wages, as a measure of social labour, continue to be paid, and the greater the quantity and the higher the quality of that social labour, the more substantial the wages and therefore the quantity of the social product which the worker obtains. But wage slavery, by which one man is compelled to sell his labour power to another, disappears, is destroyed for ever. The content of wages is changed, and this revolutionary change at once brings deep and fundamental changes in the whole conditions of life of the workers, changes obvious at once to any observer.

Communism, in its first stages, in its lower, socialist form, is a continual and deadly struggle between the old and the new. “The old surviving in the new confronts us in life at every step, in nature as well as in society,” Lenin wrote about this stage. But this very struggle is the basis of the greatest liberation of the human mind, of human energy and creative power, which history has yet known. The period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, of the construction of socialist society, in which this struggle is fought out, is above all a period of growth, of creation and of re-education. It is no accident that the greatest advances in material well-being and general culture have been made by the Soviet workers precisely at a time when the misery of the people in the capitalist world has been exposed at its deepest, when the whole violent, plundering character of the capitalist system has appeared in its most naked and

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin, *The State and Revolution*.

brutal forms, as in the destruction of the homes of the Vienna workers by artillery fire, or the terror in Germany, or the financial scandals which accompany the growth of reaction in France, the lynchings which take place under the Roosevelt regime in America, and the fascist savagery at the Olympia meeting in London.

In this period socialism has made elementary education compulsory in a country of 170 million inhabitants, including children of nationalities condemned by capitalism as "historically" illiterate, it has made secondary education compulsory in all towns and increased its higher educational institutions from 91 in 1914 to 600 in 1933, its scientific research institutes from 400 in 1929 to 840 in 1933. Clubs, theatres, cinemas, newspapers, books of all kinds increase with an abundance which is still far behind the demand, but at a rate which shows that in its general level of education the population of the Soviet Union is already outstripping even the most advanced countries of the capitalist world.

The establishment of complete sexual equality has liberated for creative work an immense force whose significance even now can hardly be calculated. But beyond doubt the equal participation of woman in every sphere of life, which is only possible under socialism, must mean the creation of a far more human, deeper and finer civilisation than any yet dreamed of by man. For the effect of the destruction of exploitation has meant not only that hundreds of thousands of workers have come into a new life as leaders and directors, as writers and poets, as organisers and inventors, but that completely new creative forces are released for humanity which even in the most advanced "democracies" of the West are restrained, corrupted, or simply crushed out of existence. Not only the equality of the sexes, the cleansing of the springs of life itself by the growth of a new relationship between the sexes, of new family forms, but the releasing

of the energies of all those peoples of so-called inferior race or nationality who have had no chance of self-development, are creating new human forces of a richness unknown to the old world.

The appearance of cities is changing with the complete wiping out of slums and the building of new workers' quarters which in many cases surpass in rational comfort and beauty the luxury quarters of the former ruling class. The villages are also changing their face, and already the beginnings of the breaking down of the old opposition between town and country are to be seen in the new State and collective farms, in the organisation of the machine tractor stations for serving the farms..

Above all it must not be forgotten that the very organisation of life itself changes under socialism with the change in human relationships which follows upon the elimination of exploitation and the gradual destruction of classes. The Soviet factory, with its production conferences, its workers' rationalisation, is a living example of how it is possible to combine authoritative leadership with the creative participation of the masses in production. The whole structure of the government, repeated down to the local soviets, arises out of and is responsive to, the creative tasks of socialist society. As the ugly blots of the inefficiency and bureaucracy inherited from the past are progressively wiped out there can be seen the clear and supple outlines of a newer and higher form of human organisation.

But these tasks are only solved, these victories achieved, because the working class, the creator of the new society, has held power firmly in its hands, never hesitating to use it relentlessly in the battle against the old. As the existence of completely classless society comes nearer, this power does not weaken, but becomes stronger. The enemies of the new society do not give up the fight until they have been either physically destroyed, when they prove incor-

rigible, or else completely re-educated and absorbed into the new society. It is impossible to teach people to work together for the good of the whole community until such elementary truths as the necessity for respecting the property of the community have become completely accepted. It is impossible to build a socialist society if the slacker, the thief, the wrecker, the criminally negligent, the drunkards, are to be allowed free play. But repression without re-education is foreign to the whole conception of socialism. The Cheka, the G. P. U., the organ of the proletarian dictatorship once most dreaded by its enemies, was always an immense force in the re-education of both the backward sections and the enemies of the working class. Its members were themselves engineers, inventors, organisers, able to build canals or raise ships from the sea-bed, to found model colonies for so-called "criminals" to check inefficiency in production and fight red tape or bureaucracy, as well as to fight to the death for the cause of their class, the creation of classless society. "For when *all* have learned to manage," Lenin writes, "and independently are actually managing social production by themselves, keeping accounts, controlling the idlers, the gentle-folk, the swindlers and similar 'guardians of capitalist traditions', then the escape from this national accounting and control will inevitably become so increasingly difficult, such a rare exception, and will probably be accompanied by such swift and severe punishment (for the armed workers are men of practical life, not sentimental intellectuals, and they will hardly allow anyone to trifle with them), that very soon the *necessity* of observing the simple, fundamental rules of everyday social life in common will become a *habit*."

"The door will then be wide open for the transition from the first phase of Communist society to its higher phase, and along with it to the complete withering away of the State." (Lenin, *The State and Revolution*).

## CHAPTER VI

### FROM CAPITALISM TO COMMUNISM

WHEN the worker, faced with a reduction in wages or some act of tyranny inside the factory, goes on strike, he finds that the factory gate is watched not only by pickets of the strikers, but also by a strong force of police. Should the police-officer deem the picketing is passing the bounds of the "peaceful," the picket is arrested and the striking worker finds himself in prison, an institution concerning the character of which there is some confusion among its supporters, the one school claiming it to be "repressive," the other "reformative." The worker has his own opinion.

In this way the worker, in the course of his struggle for life, comes into contact with the State. He meets it also in many other ways in the course of his daily existence. If he falls out of work and cannot pay rent or rates, the State assists in evicting him, with his family, from his home. While he remains unemployed, the officials of the State demand the fullest details of his private life, and in certain circumstances can order him to perform unpaid labour in prison conditions for the State. Every five years or so he may be called upon to exercise his functions as a citizen and ruler of this same State which imprisons and torments him, by putting a cross on a voting-paper opposite the name of the candidate for Parliament or president who he thinks is likely to torment him the least. The next years he spends in discovering his mistake.

What is this State with which the worker finds himself in continual conflict, while at the same time he is assured



by all persons of knowledge and authority, from his employer to his trade union leader, that it is his servant, and that every General Election places it in his hands? "The State is a machine for maintaining the rule of one class over another," says Lenin. So long as classes have existed, and so long as they shall continue to exist, the dominant class has maintained an apparatus of compulsion, based on violence, in order to defend its privileges against the dominated classes. The State grows out of the irreconcilable antagonisms of class society and it is, as Lenin emphasises, at once "the product and the manifestation of the *irreconcilability* of class antagonisms. The State arises when, where and to the extent that the class antagonisms *cannot* be objectively reconciled. And, conversely, the existence of the State proves that the class antagonisms *are* irreconcilable."

The growth and development of the State, from the first Priest-Kings of the early agricultural communities along the great rivers of Asia, down to our modern, highly organised imperialism, has always been accompanied by the development of groups of persons, closely connected with the dominant class, who are "specialists in ruling . . . who rise up above society and who are called rulers, representatives of the State." (Lenin). Whatever particular form the State has taken, Monarchy or Republic, Aristocracy or Democracy, it has always guaranteed the rights and privileges of the dominant class, whether slave-holders, feudal landlords and merchants or modern capitalists.

Capitalism in its progressive period almost everywhere established parliamentary democracy as the typical State form, though naturally from country to country the degree and character of this democracy varied considerably in accordance with the peculiar development of the class struggle in each country. British democracy, with its strong survivals of feudalism, was the creation of the

two revolutions of the seventeenth century and of the onslaught of the industrial bourgeoisie in the first third of the nineteenth century, an onslaught checked in its turn by the rise to independent class struggle of the workers in the Chartist movement. French democracy grew up out of the great Revolution which began in 1789, out of the revolts of 1848, the Paris Commune of 1871, while in America first the revolutionary war against Britain, and finally the Civil War against the Southern slave-owners were the decisive stages in building the newest and most "advanced" capitalist State.

Capitalist democracy implies equality. It implies, in theory, complete equality of all citizens before the law, equality of the sexes, of race, religion and nationality. It implies the equal right of all to determine the structure and administration of the State. Yet capitalism has nowhere created such complete democratic equality, and can create it nowhere. In Britain equality before the law exists in form and is daily violated in practice, while the whole semi-feudal character of legal procedure makes it essentially a fortress of privilege and bars the courts to the poor man. Equality of the sexes does not exist in this or any other capitalist country, since there are in existence not only serious legal, "moral," and religious handicaps for women, but there is not even a vestige of economic equality. There is no equality of religion, since there is a subsidised State church, and no equality of race and nationality since all kinds of disabilities are maintained not only with regard to "aliens," but also towards non-European inhabitants of the Empire. Neither is there political equality, since money deposits are called for from candidates, plural voting exists, and a caste of "hereditary legislators."

Capitalism does not and cannot realise even the formal equality in a legal sense implied in democracy, because of the existence of the very class antagonisms created by the

capitalist mode of production. Even granting all this, it may nevertheless be objected that Marxism here is bound up in a contradiction. For, with all its deficiencies, capitalist democracy implies a greater measure of freedom than feudalism, whereas, if class antagonisms are deeper and more irreconcilable, as Marxism maintains, surely the opposite might have been expected, in place of a recognition of equality, however formal, a stronger and more arbitrary apparatus for maintaining the privileges of the capitalist class?

The question is a vital one, for it is precisely by such an argument, which is that of traditional liberal theory of the State, that reformism tries to hold back the working class from struggle against the capitalist State. The argument is false, because it is unhistorical. It ignores the fact that capitalism, in its struggle against feudalism, was compelled to put forward the claim for equality and freedom for capitalist property as against feudal property. The struggle for democracy goes far back into history, but capitalism was only able to win freedom and equality for itself by rousing the masses of peasants, workers and urban poor against the old feudal society. While the new law lying at the basis of the new State which arose out of the revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries recognised the freedom and equality of property and protected that property against attacks from either the feudal classes (who have since gradually been absorbed into the capitalist class) or from the propertyless classes, it nevertheless had to extend a formal recognition to the new and powerful class of proletarians created by capitalism.

Slave society recognised no rights for the slave, feudal society recognised no rights for the serf, capitalist society owing to the conditions of its development, owing to its creation of such a powerful, united class as the proletariat, has been compelled to yield formal recognition of certain rights to this class. But, at the same time, capitalism

creates an infinitely more powerful machine of compulsion than has ever before existed in history. In its final phase, in the epoch of imperialism, the capitalist State becomes an enormous, parasitic burden, and the working class under this burden, paid for from the surplus value which it creates, staggers like a modern Christian in a contemporary Pilgrim's Progress.

Alongside this increase in the means of compulsion, capitalism contrives a thousand shifts and tricks, a whole culture of deception, to keep the working class from actually making use of such rights as they possess, and particularly to prevent them from participating actively and consciously in political life. So deep does this culture of deceit penetrate into almost every feature of life in a capitalist State, that it could not be completely described in even a library of books. The greatest geniuses of the capitalist world have exposed it in their novels and plays, but even so have not been able to grapple with anything like all of its manifestations.

Let us take first the three freedoms which are the corner stones of capitalist democracy, the freedom of the Press, of speech and of meeting. Since in capitalist society all the newspapers and printing-presses belong, with negligible exceptions, to the capitalist class, this class is able to ensure that all the wells of thought are poisoned by its own propaganda. Enlightened members of the capitalist class, after hard and bitter struggles, are able from time to time to break through this dumb censorship and throw a revealing light upon the society in which they live. The working class, by dint of appalling sacrifices, are able to scrape together from their pennies enough to establish small printing-presses and produce struggling news sheets to express their aims and organise their fight. Great geniuses like Marx and Lenin find infinite difficulty in getting their books published. In most countries the works of proletarian writers suffer censorship or confiscation.

It is, of course, impossible for capitalism to suppress the voice of the working class, but it is more clever than this. So long as it is able to do so, it uses its virtual monopoly of the Press and book publishing in order to corrupt the minds of whole nations. Capitalism's bawling bitch, the modern Press, is a stew of filth and nonsense deliberately designed to prevent the mass of people from using their minds, from becoming conscious participators in social life. Sport, sex, crime, the holy trinity of the modern Press, have proved exceedingly effective weapons. For the first time in human history the ruling class has used its power not merely to mutilate the bodies of its slaves, but to mutilate their minds. All the resources of science and technique are made use of with infinite resource in accomplishing this great end. Capitalism even uses its power in Britain in order to win a monopoly of the Press of reformist socialism and bring it into complete uniformity with the other great organs of "public opinion." Between a fascist government which drugs its prisoners in order to prevent their speaking the truth and a "democracy," which drugs its citizens in order to prevent their knowing the truth, the difference is only one of degree. The Minister of Propaganda, Goebbels, is the only logical development of the Beaverbrook—Rothermere—Odhams tradition and to a class which can habitually poison millions with the modern daily paper, the poisoning of one Van der Lubbe is no great matter.

Freedom of speech and thought cannot of course be considered apart from this monopoly of the bourgeoisie over the printing-press, the radio, the cinema, the theatre and the public halls, over all the *material* means of expression. If the capitalist cinema and the London theatres are examples of freedom of thought, then it is only possible to draw the conclusion that under capitalism the intellectuals have lost the capacity to think and to express emotion. As for the wireless, no pretence of "freedom" is made

here and censorship is operated shamelessly and openly upon a class basis. The notorious cases of the "National Character" and "Causes of War" broadcasts are hardly likely to be forgotten. An employer is permitted to make a viciously tendentious and almost openly fascist address. The worker who follows him has his talk so censored as to make it a travesty upon his class and is forced publicly to expose the class character of this particular piece of the capitalist State apparatus. A distinguished professor is prevented from giving a socialist address on the causes of war.

The so-called freedom of meeting is also limited for the working class by the fact that all the best halls are owned by the capitalists who refuse their use for workers' meetings. It is limited by the fact that police and military exist to prevent the workers from meeting when capitalism feels that it is in danger. In London, for example, the police break up all meetings at Labour Exchanges, and arrest the speakers. In Birmingham and other cities they break up all meetings outside factories and arrest the speakers. The speakers at all working-class meetings, but particularly in London, Birmingham and South Wales are intimidated by the presence of detectives. The present writer once addressed a small election meeting in a Birmingham schoolroom at which no less than seven detectives were present, the total audience being less than one hundred. Enormous police concentrations protect fascist meetings, while the workers are forbidden the right to demonstrate at all in Manchester and Liverpool.

It is claimed that universal suffrage offers the possibility of making the popular will felt. Two things are overlooked. First, that universal suffrage is compatible with the worst forms of dictatorship. Napoleon III was able to make excellent use of it in his twenty years' plunder of the French people. Fascism also makes use of universal suffrage. Even the most notoriously corrupt Balkan

tyrannies hold "elections". The power to vote is in itself, of course, no power at all. Secondly, the whole nature of parliamentary democracy is such that its very basis is the political unconsciousness of the masses. Bagehot, writing in 1872 of the British system of Parliamentary democracy, exposes this basis as follows:

"The minor English shopkeepers . . . were just competent to make a selection between two sets of superior ideas . . . between two opposing parties . . . But they could do no more. . . . They were competent to decide an issue selected by the higher classes, but they were incompetent to do more. . . . We have not enfranchised a class less needing to be guided by their betters than the old class of voters; on the contrary, the new class (i.e., the working class—R.F.) need it more than the old."

The late Earl of Balfour, a man of few illusions, commenting on this pearl of constitutional wisdom in 1927, just after the General Strike, wrote:

"Let the political parties be reduced to two . . . but let the chasm dividing them be so profound that a change of Administration would in fact be a revolution disguised under a constitutional procedure. . . . It may perhaps be replied that if a majority of the House of Commons want a revolution they ought to have one; and no doubt if the House of Commons on this point fully represented the settled convictions of the community the reply suffices. But if not? Is there any means of ensuring that in these extreme cases the House of Commons *would* represent the settled will of the community. . . . Could it long survive the shocks of revolutionary and counter-revolutionary violence? I know not. The experiment has never been tried. Our alternating Cabinets, though belonging to different parties, have never differed about the foundations of society. And it is evident that our whole political

machinery pre-supposes a people so fundamentally at one they can safely afford to bicker; and so sure of their own moderation that they are not dangerously disturbed by the never-ending din of political conflict."

This cynical politician was clear enough in his mind as to the limits of bourgeois, parliamentary democracy. He points out plainly that it is in fact a machine for preserving intact the existing "foundations of society" and that any serious threat to those foundations means the end of parliamentary "democracy". Bourgeois democracy is one form of the capitalist State, of the organised, systematic application of force against human beings in order to maintain bourgeois society. It is no less a dictatorship, a system in which real power is in the hands of one class, because that dictatorship is concealed. Capitalism has proved that up to a point it is possible to rule by fraud as well as by violence.

In the days of capitalist growth and capitalist health, when it was still radiant with its victory over feudal darkness, the working class had considerable freedom.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the State was relatively weak. Marx considered that in mid-nineteenth-century England the working class might well have won power peacefully, had they

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<sup>1</sup> Since the workers at this period did not possess the vote, there may be those who will question such a statement. Yet from 1836 to 1848, during the whole of the great Chartist movement, the workers had freedom to arm, to hold vast demonstrations which to-day would certainly be interfered with under the Edward III Act which allows the organisers to be imprisoned without any overt act or breach of the peace having been committed, while the workers' Press of those days, though crippled at first by the newspaper tax, was far freer from prosecution under the Libel and Sedition laws. More severe sentences are passed to-day on working-class leaders than was ever the



possessed political independence. He never, of course, considered that capitalism would have acquiesced in such a peaceful revolution which he declared would inevitably have to fight against a "slave-holders' rebellion." The development of imperialism has completely changed this situation. Monopoly capitalism is more violent, tyrannical and parasitic than capitalism of the old days of free competition. The working class in the great mass production factories, so scientifically exploited that the last drop of sweat is squeezed from them, is a more numerous, compact and menacing force than it was in the last century. The development of permanent, mass unemployment, the growth of militarism, the most frightful of all forms of class exploitation in the shape of imperialist war, all these things have meant that capitalism in order to maintain its power has had to centralise and strengthen its State apparatus. The average State expenditure from 1883 to 1885 was £80,300,000. From 1911 to 1913 it was £163,300,000, a little more than double. From 1930 to 1933 it had risen again to £782,122,000. Of this total, much more than half goes upon armaments and debt charges, that is to say upon war. The price paid by the workers and petty-bourgeoisie for maintaining "the foundations of society" is becoming unbearable.

The violent character of capitalism becomes increasingly obvious. The transition from "democracy" to pen fascist dictatorship becomes more rapid. Fascist dictator-

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case with the Chartists, except in the repression of the Newport rising. It is worth while to remember in these days when sentences of three years' penal servitude are becoming common that the sending of Ernest Jones to prison for two years' hard labour in 1848 roused intense indignation throughout the country and that occasions when the police made brutal attacks upon workers' demonstrations were much less frequent then than to-day.

ship is the open, terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, jingoistic and imperialist elements of finance-capitalism. It is in no way a contradiction of "democracy," but is born out of its very nature. The whole ideology of fascism is merely the logical development of the ideas expressed every day in the "free", "democratic" Press of monopoly capitalism, of the psychology of imperialist "statesmen" of all the Conservative, Liberal and Labour Parties, of the daily speeches of trade union leaders. The Liberal Sir John Simon in condemning Black Shirts the very same week as he has encouraged the fascist Government of Austria to declare civil war upon its working class, is merely expressing the fact that he considers the capitalist class of Britain still has room to manoeuvre against its workers without the aid of howitzers and machine-guns.

What is the significance of fascism? It is this. As capitalism decays, as its general crisis grows more acute, it becomes an intolerable burden not only upon the industrial working class, but upon millions of small business men, employees, technical intelligentsia and shopkeepers. Crushing taxation to pay for war preparations, while these masses still bear on their shoulders all the cost of the last war, subsidies by the State to the banks and great trusts whose affairs are in danger, economic crisis which ruins the shopkeeper, small farmer, petty business man, brings unemployment to the clerk and the school teacher, all these things raise millions to political life and activity who had formerly been more than content to accept the world as it is. Backward section of the working class which had hitherto slumbered apathetically come angrily awake. Political questions, once considered "boring" or not quite "good form," or even irreligious, are everywhere discussed. The whole social system is questioned, not only by the working class, which has always led in the fight against capitalism, but also by the

intermediate sections and classes.

What the Earl of Balfour foresaw comes to pass. In such circumstances parliamentary democracy ceases to be workable, it becomes a danger to capitalism. It is a danger, not because free elections and parliament are in themselves a method of altering "the foundations of society," but because their very futility for the purpose becomes apparent in such circumstances. The institutions of bourgeois democracy, limited though they are, become at such time a menace because they allow the working class freedom to organise itself for the onslaught on capitalism, freedom to win over or neutralise the intermediate sections for the coming battle. At such times as these it becomes increasingly difficult for the weapons of deceit and fraud to conceal the real character of exploitation, it becomes more and more difficult, as the pressure of the working class becomes greater, as the big capitalists get more isolated from the masses, for them to preserve their own unity.

Desperate efforts are made by the capitalists to find some sort of mass support. Though their own disunity is apparent to the world, it becomes vital to present a united front. Every effort has to be strained in order to destroy the class organisations of the workers, to exterminate their revolutionary leaders, to deprive them of the chance of leading or neutralising the petty-bourgeois masses. The first stage in this fight is carried on in the name of "democracy", by the help of those "leaders" of the working class who claim that parliamentary democracy is the supreme goal of man's ambition, who declare that the working class must struggle, not for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of socialism, but for "constitutionally" transforming capitalism into a system of "public corporations". It is declared by all and sundry, from Mr. Baldwin down to Mr. Hannen Swaffer, that "freedom" is threatened both from the Right and from

the Left.

Simultaneously, under the pretence of defending "freedom", violent attacks are made upon the Left, that is upon the revolutionary organisation of the workers, and a series of mild reproofs and ineffective prohibitions is administered to open fascism. The story is spread very subtly among the petty-bourgeois masses that this is "democracy's last chance." "Order," "authority", "discipline," become the catchwords of the day. The repressive forces of the State are more and more used against the workers. Picketing becomes impossible unless it is on a mass scale and organised so as to fight all police provocation. Demonstrations are first hindered, then broken up, finally forbidden, all in the name of "democracy". Sedition trials become a normal part of life and the victims are never fascists but always workers.

Appeals to the nationalist passions of the petty-bourgeois masses become more violent and frequent. These masses are not socialist, save in their most advanced sections, but they are becoming increasingly anti-capitalist. "Disillusioned" social-democrats, political adventurers of all kinds, play upon these feelings, and finally a mass fascist party is formed. If the working class is unable to unite its ranks, to press forward against capitalism, to strike back blow for blow, to prepare to pass from the defensive to the offensive, capitalism then makes use of its new weapon, flings off the democratic mask, and with this new mass basis establishes its terrorist dictatorship.

Fascism claims to be a "third empire", neither capitalism, nor socialism. It is in fact the logical development of the democratic rule of the bourgeoisie. The military dictatorship which existed side by side with the National Governments of 1915-1922, the National Government of 1931 and its steady strengthening of all the fascist elements in the State, are the stages towards the open dictatorship of capitalism in Britain. The capitalist, as Werner Sombart

points out, has always had a good deal of the mediæval robber baron in his make-up. Certainly, just as in the Middle Ages the decline of feudalism emphasised the purely predatory character of the ruling class, and the progressive character of its bourgeois opponents, so to-day the existence of socialism exposes the purely predatory character of the declining ruling class in the capitalist world. The modern rulers of society are a mixture of Al Capone and the Borgias, with the characteristics of the former predominating. Alexander Borgia became God's vice-regent on earth, but Mr. Kreuger only just escaped canonisation as the patron saint of modern capitalism owing to an untimely complication in his affairs.

The democratic State is the guardian of capitalist property. Dicey, the classical English authority on the "Law of the Constitution", expresses this with a happy simplicity in the introduction to the last edition of his famous book.

"The blackleg," he writes, "may be, and one may suspect often is, a mean fellow who, to put money into his own pocket, breaks rules which his fellow-workers hold to be just and beneficial to the trade generally. He, for example, has no objection, if properly paid for it, to work with men who are not members of any union. The blackleg, however, all but invariably keeps within the law of the land, and proposes to do nothing which violates any principle established by common law or any enactment to be found in the Statute Book. The trade unionists whom he offends know perfectly well that the blackleg is in the eye of the law no wrong-doer; they therefore feel that the courts are his protectors, and that, somehow or other, trade unions must be protected against the intervention of the judges. Hence the invention of that self-contradictory idea of 'peaceful picketing', which is no more capable of real existence than would be 'peaceful war' or 'unoppressive

oppression.' "(p. xi.)

Most clearly and wisely put. "Along with freedom—property, thus is it written in your constitution. . . . Yes, we answer, your freedom, English, French and American gentlemen, is a fraud if it contradicts the emancipation of labour from the oppression of capital. You have forgotten one rifle, civilised gentlemen. You have forgotten that your freedom is written in a constitution which *legalises private property*. That is the essence of the matter." Dicey might have been writing illustrative material to these words of Lenin. All the sophisms which have now become a daily feature on the lips of statesmen and publicists concerning the "limitations", and "defects" of democracy are only echoes of capitalism's understanding that the democratic State, which was a splendid instrument in the days when the economic system flourished and was unchallenged by victorious socialism, may to-day become a danger to capitalist property. When that property can only be protected by civil war the democratic State becomes the fascist State.

Perhaps no point in the Communist outlook is more violently disputed than this, and with good reason, for once the character of capitalist democracy is recognised as being only a concealed form of capitalist dictatorship, then it is impossible not to accept also the Communist view of the necessity to capture that machine and smash it from top to bottom in order to build on its ruins a workers' State, a workers' dictatorship, which shall carry through the transition to socialism. The whole policy of social-democracy turns upon persuading the working class that capitalist democracy is "pure democracy," that it is possible to use it for the elimination of capitalist private property and the transition to socialism. Mr. G. D. H. Cole in his pamphlet *The Working-class Movement and the Transition to Socialism*, expresses this attitude with great clearness:

"Our aim is to begin the positive advance to socialism by winning a parliamentary victory; to place a strong Socialist Government in authority by constitutional means, and thereafter to advance speedily to socialism not by a violent seizure of power, but by a series of drastic legislative and administrative acts. We are hoping, unless our opponents take up arms against us despite the legality of our proceedings, to accomplish the transition to socialism without civil war; and we are therefore relying on the leadership of the regularly established working class and socialist bodies to take charge of the movement and to play the dominant part in seeing it through."

Almost any constitutional authority could inform Mr. Cole and Sir Stafford Cripps, what in fact they know perfectly well already, that it is not and never could be "legal" to alter what the Earl of Balfour called "the foundations of society". It is, of course, fairly doubtful whether the famous "five-year plan" of constitutional revolution which the Socialist League aims at does in fact in any way threaten capitalist private property. If we are to believe Mrs. Barbara Wootton, "the methods by which London passenger transport has recently been unified as a public enterprise form an excellent model of the lines along which, with only minor variations, socialisation by purchase must proceed."<sup>1</sup> The same lady sees socialist industry being run by men who, in the public interest, will be ready to accept a beggarly remuneration of "twelve or thirteen thousand as public servants."

The London Transport Board, it is worth remembering, was created by the most reactionary Government of modern times, and anyone who read the City columns of the Press at the time when the whisper ran round of the compensation to be paid by the Board to Tilling's Bus

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<sup>1</sup> *Plan or No Plan*, Barbara Wootton, page 274.

Company for their "socialisation," can hardly have failed to notice with satisfaction that the self-sacrificing shareholders were rewarded by an immediate and substantial rise in the value of their investments.

This brings us to a second most important point. Social-democracy does not in fact stand for the destruction of the present social system, but for its maintenance. It stands for its maintenance (and "reform") by means of the present democratic State as a "lesser evil" than open capitalist dictatorship of the fascist type which is compelled to destroy the social-democratic organisations, not through fear of their leaders, but through fear of their working-class members. German social-democracy is the classical example of this policy.

In Germany at the end of 1918 a mighty working class revolution covered the country with soviets, sent the militarist dictatorship of the Kaiser flying in less than a week, stopped the war and threatened to spread soviet power from the North Sea to the Pacific Ocean. The German revolution of 1918 put power into the hands of the workers and soldiers, roused the poor peasantry, created a great working-class democracy in the shape of the soviets. The social-democrats, including the Left Independents, the equivalent of our Socialist League and certain Independent Labour Party leaders, bent every effort to destroying or rendering ineffective this working-class *proletarian dictatorship*, to disarming the people and restoring power to the *dictatorship of the bourgeoisie*, the "democratic" National Assembly. To accomplish this they formed an alliance with the most reactionary elements in the country, the men who to-day lead Hitler's mercenaries, and did not hesitate before the murder of the leaders of the revolutionary workers, Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, Leo Jogisches, Eugene Levine. The power of the Soviets, working-class democracy, was destroyed, and bourgeois democracy embodied in its place in the



Weimar Constitution.

German social-democracy, in the chief states of the Reich and for much of the time in the Reich itself, was in power from 1918 to 1932. Throughout this period it used its power, not to destroy the Versailles Treaty which enslaved the German masses (though in this they could have been sure of the support of the workers of the whole world), not in order to transform Germany from a capitalist to a socialist state, but chiefly in order to suppress all activity of the workers, to take away from them one by one the conquests of the revolution of 1918, and to clear the path for the coming to power of Hitler. In a recent declaration by the exiled committee of the party in Prague, all this is acknowledged and it is declared that the whole policy of the German socialists from August 1914, when they began open co-operation with the capitalist State, was mistaken. This policy, now denounced by these gentlemen become so very wise so very long after so many events, is the official policy of the Second International, of which, with the British Labour Party, they have long been the leaders.

It is impossible to accept seriously this declaration as an honest acknowledgment of what, if we are to believe its makers, has been a treacherous and criminal policy. The declaration merely reflects the fact that the working-class membership of their party can no longer be deceived, that they are working hand in hand with their Communist brothers for a Soviet Germany. It is more interesting to note the omissions in the declaration and the steps which have led to a once great party being forced to such a confession. Firstly, of course, the policy which is now (in words) abandoned began long before 1914. It began when the German socialists, under Bebel's and Kautsky's leadership, refused to expel the opportunists, from Bernstein to David, putting forward "unity" as the excuse, but instead did not hesitate to threaten the radical Left

represented by Luxemburg, Mehring and others with expulsion. 1914 had been prepared by a whole generation of compromise with opportunism, that is with capitalism.

From 1914 to the spectacle of "Socialist" deputies voting for Hitler in the Reichstag of 1933 was a natural evolution. The idea that Bruening-Hindenburg was a lesser evil than Von Papen, Von Papen—Schleicher—Hindenburg a lesser evil than Hitler, led quite naturally and inevitably, as Mr. Edgar Mowrer in his *Germany Puts the Clock Back* has shown, to the final scene of Hindenburg—Hitler and the comedy of the Prague declaration.

The German believers in "pure democracy", like their British counterparts, have never tired of proclaiming that fascism thrives on working-class resistance. The more the workers strike, demonstrate and struggle against starvation, war and capitalist tyranny, it is claimed, the stronger fascism grows. Therefore fold your arms, do not strike, do not demonstrate, accept the blows of fate from the democratic policeman's truncheon with a head bloody, but of course unbowed. By using every means to prevent working-class unity and working-class resistance, the German social-democrats were able to prevent resistance to Hitler's "constitutional" assumption of power in February 1933. After all, a "constitutional" fascist terror is a lesser evil than an "unconstitutional" one.

The German experience, supplemented by the events in Austria, is the final refutation of the thesis that through "pure democracy" it is possible to achieve socialism. At the National Congress of Action held in London in February 1934, a rank and file trade unionist, the Chairman of the Bradford Trades Council, expressed this very well when he said that the fascist demonstrations in Paris, the events in Austria, and the terror in Germany, have convinced every thinking worker that there can no longer be any argument about "violence". It is clear to all now that capitalism is rooted in violence, exists by violence

and can only be destroyed by violence. These events have proved to millions what the Communists mean by terming the present-day reformists "social-fascists"; "social-fascism," Stalin has said, "is the moderate wing of fascism."<sup>1</sup>

We cannot better sum up the Communist attitude to democracy and to the capitalist State than by quoting Lenin's own conclusions from his book *The State and Revolution*.

"Democracy is of great importance for the working class in its struggle for freedom against the capitalists. But democracy is by no means a limit one may not overstep; it is only one of the stages in the course of development from feudalism to capitalism, and from capitalism to Communism. . . .

"Democracy is a form of the State—one of its varieties. Consequently, like every State, it consists in organised, systematic application of force against human beings. This on the one hand. On the other hand, however, it signifies the formal recognition of the equality of all citizens, the equal right of all to determine the structure and administration of the State. This, in turn, is connected with the fact that, at a certain stage in the development of democracy, it first rallies the proletariat as a revolutionary class against capitalism, and gives it an opportunity to crush, to smash to bits, to wipe off the face of the earth the bourgeois State machinery—even its republican variety; the standing army, the police, and bureaucracy; then it substitutes for all this a *more* democratic, but still a State, machinery in the shape of armed masses of workers, which becomes transformed

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<sup>1</sup> Herr Otto Bauer, leader of the Austrian socialists, has admitted that in negotiations with Chancellor Dollfuss, he not only agreed to a two years' suspension of the constitution, but also to the *corporative state*. See *Austrian Democracy under Fire* by Otto Bauer, pages 21-22.

into universal participation of the people in the militia.

"Here 'quantity turns into quality': *such* a degree of democracy is bound up with the abandonment of the framework of bourgeois society, and the beginning of its socialist reconstruction. If *everyone* really takes part in the administration of the State, capitalism cannot retain its hold. In its turn, capitalism, as it develops, itself creates the *prerequisites* for 'everyone' to be *able* really to take part in the administration of the State. Among such prerequisites are universal literacy, already realised in most of the advanced capitalist countries, then the 'training and disciplining' of millions of workers by the huge, complex and socialised apparatus of the post-office, the railways, the big factories, large-scale commerce, banking, etc., etc."

But the chief question remains, how are these millions to win possession of the State? The answer is plainly written in the life around us, for the whole struggle of the working class is becoming more and more plainly a struggle for power and Marx's brilliant insight which led him to declare that the class struggle leads inevitably to the dictatorship of the proletariat is being proved correct. That the soviets, the organs of workers' dictatorship, are not specifically Russian, was long ago shown to be the case. Wherever the working class finds that it has no longer any freedom of movement within the confines of the "democratic" capitalist State, wherever it finds that the struggle for daily bread must be combined with a political struggle against the State (and therefore against their own "leaders" who accept that State) they form soviets or organisations akin to soviets as the alternative organs of workers' power in order to press their struggle home to victory.

During the war the Shop Steward's Committees in Britain had to abandon the idea of remaining purely industrial organisations and to undertake the task of

organising a political struggle against the State. In this way they took a first, partial step towards becoming soviets. In 1919 and 1920 Councils of Action were formed which enforced a political policy of the working class upon the "democratic" Coalition Government, the policy of peace with Soviet Russia. In 1926 the workers opposed the offensive of capital by a General Strike organised by local Councils of Action. As the strike lasted these Councils began automatically to assume functions of Government, control of transport, supplies, distribution, etc. With true class instinct the capitalist raised the cry of a threat to "democracy", of a challenge to the State. Neither in 1920 nor in 1926 were these actual soviets, organs of working-class power, which have a far wider basis, including delegates from all factories and depots, from all mass organisations of the workers and labouring population, but they were striking proof that as soon as the working class as a whole finds its vital interests in conflict with the capitalist State, the workers are compelled to take steps which must inevitably grow into the creation of real soviets, unless one side or the other surrenders.

From 1917 to the middle of 1919 the workers, spontaneously rising against the Governments guilty of war, set up soviet power in Russia, Bavaria, Finland, Latvia, Hungary. In the rest of Germany, in Austria, the soviets though not victorious were a serious challenge to bourgeois democracy. But outside Russia the workers nowhere succeeded in establishing their power. The causes are clear enough to-day, when in every one of these countries bourgeois democracy has become transformed into fascist terror. The influence of those socialists who still believed in the fiction of "pure democracy" was still everywhere predominant outside Russia while the working class, though profoundly disillusioned in these leaders owing to their conduct in the war, had not yet broken away from them and formed mass revolutionary parties. The experi-

ence of the Bolsheviks had not yet been assimilated by the workers of the West, who, despite the war, still did not understand clearly that the conditions of terror under which the Bolshevik party had been formed, were going to become general in all imperialist countries unless forestalled by workers' dictatorship.

To-day the lessons of these years and the example of the Soviet Union, with its freedom and socialist prosperity for 170 million toilers as opposed to the conditions in the fascist countries, are rapidly entering the consciousness of the advanced workers in every country. The General Strike against fascism in France, the growing unity against fascism of the Spanish workers, and of the German workers in the Saar, are signs that "pure democracy" and all the illusions spread by its supporters, cannot any longer keep back the working class from unity. Unity of the working class, which can only be maintained and created by revolutionary leadership, against the will of reformism, is the path to power. To-day it is almost impossible for a large strike, a mass demonstration, to take place in a capitalist country without the workers raising the question of soviet power. While capitalism is preparing for war, re-arming at lightning speed, the working class is accumulating no less rapidly revolutionary energy and experience for the overthrow of capitalism.

In those countries, where this struggle for power is nearest, Germany, Spain, Poland, reformism is abandoning its belief in "pure democracy", and is now calling for "revolutionary social-democracy", and even for the dictatorship of the proletariat, though without the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. But this merely proves that in these countries the advanced workers are turning finally and irrevocably to Communism, that their democratic illusions are dead. In England this is still far from the case, and here the reformists are bringing forward a new argument to prove the impossibility of revolution.

It is no longer true that the bourgeoisie and proletariat are the decisive classes in society. The petty-bourgeoisie was overlooked by Marx. Mr. G. D. H. Cole puts the point with his usual precision and with all the solemnity of his own Superintendent Wilson when discovering a vital clue:

"The class-structure of society becomes, with the development of capitalism, not simpler, but more complex. Society is not marked off into two clear-cut classes—capitalists and proletarians—but infinitely graded. The intermediate groups do not disappear, but wax in social and economic importance. The petty-bourgeoisie does not peacefully endure the threat of submergence in the proletariat: it resorts to fascism. The great capitalist do not swallow up the small: they dominate and use them."

Mr. Cole is so excited at his discovery that he has written a whole book "explaining" Marx and amending him on these particular points. Unfortunately Marx never imagined that society would resolve into two classes and that all intermediate sections would disappear, as a simple reading of the Communist Manifesto could show Mr. Cole. But the idea that the petty-bourgeoisie forms a "third force" and that this is the basis of fascism, is widespread. Incidentally, of course, it is the idea of the fascists themselves, who assiduously spread the illusion that they are a "third Empire", a kind of "rational" and "national" socialism which takes into account all those "realities" of modern society which Mr. Cole and his fellow-thinkers accuse Communism of overlooking.

Both Marx and Lenin devoted great attention to precisely this question of the role of the urban and the rural petty-bourgeoisie in modern society and particularly in times of revolutionary crisis. In this they differed from the leaders of the Second International, who never attempted to analyse the peculiar role of the petty-bourgeoisie but instead simply swallowed wholesale all the illusions of

these same intermediate sections and attempted to spread them among the workers. A whole anthology of quotations might be composed in which Marx, Engels and Lenin foresaw the terrorist development of "democracy" precisely as a result of this petty-bourgeois treachery of the socialist opportunists. But neither Marx nor Lenin ever pretended that the terrorist dictatorship of capitalism in decay, based upon the panic fear of socialism among certain sections of the petty-bourgeoisie and the illusions of others that it is possible to throw off the yoke of big capital without revolutionary struggle, would be other than what it is, a bloody and hopeless tyranny. They never tried to deceive the workers into believing in the existence of a "third force" in capitalist commodity economy.

Lenin answered Mr. Cole as long ago as 1919. "In fact the issue of the struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie decides everything, and the intermediate, middle classes (including the whole petty-bourgeoisie, which means the whole 'peasantry') inevitably hesitate between the one camp and the other. It is a question of joining these intermediate sections to one of the chief forces, to the proletariat or the bourgeoisie. Anything else is *impossible*. He who has not understood this when reading Marx's *Capital* has understood nothing of Marx, has understood nothing about socialism, is in fact a philistine petty-bourgeois, blindly hanging on to the bourgeoisie. And he who has understood this will not let himself be deceived by phrases about 'freedom' and 'equality', but will think and speak about *the facts*."

In Germany at present, owing chiefly to the disillusion of these intermediate sections in the petty-bourgeois "socialism" of Mr. Cole's German colleagues and to the success of these same colleagues in dividing the working class and holding it back from the struggle against capital, these masses have been temporarily won over to the side of German finance—capital and support of its terrorist



dictatorship. As the resistance of the workers to that dictatorship hardens, as the German Communists build up the anti-fascist front, the petty-bourgeois masses and backward workers will become disillusioned also in the power of Hitler to find bread and work, they will follow the working class in their final and decisive attack on German capitalism. Unity, boldness and resolution in the workers under the leadership of revolutionary Communism can avoid the bloody lessons of Germany. Where these qualities are in evidence fascism will find no mass basis. Capitalism will be unable to resist for long the pressure of the proletariat. But unity, boldness and resolution are not tapped out on the keys of Fabian typewriters. The working class has to build up its leadership of thousands of Dimitrovs with a different inspiration from that which emanates from Oxford common-rooms or even from "the intelligent man's" suburban study.

Such a party is created by men and women who are in the very centre of the workers' struggle, who are able to fight for every factory, mine, garage and depot, who are able to work in every mass organisation of the workers, whether it is led by fascists, by militarists or by social-fascists, with fearlessness and agility, who are ready now to risk their lives in the struggle to win over the armed forces of capitalism, its military machine, for the working class when the decisive moment of struggle comes. That struggle, the peak of the class battles of the proletariat, inevitably assumes an armed form, the form of civil war.

The high development of modern military technique has been used by reformism to spread the legend that it is impossible for the workers to win in an armed fight against the military machine. Stalin in one of his speeches has answered this. "Only people who have fallen back into second childhood can think that the laws of artillery are stronger than the laws of history." Modern artillery is a terrible weapon in the conflict of classes and of nations.

To refuse to recognise this would be to proclaim oneself a madman. It is the very fact that the recognition of this fact is burning itself into the consciousness of millions of workers in Asia, Europe and America that in effect spells the doom of capitalism. For an artillery, a military technique, in the service of historical development, an artillery whose laws are brought into correspondence with the laws of history, a red artillery, is invincible and inevitable.

The method by which such an artillery is formed, the military question of how the technical superiority of the ruling class is to be overcome, cannot, unfortunately, be discussed here. Shanghai was seized in 1927 by a rising of workers who were almost unarmed; Chapei in 1931 held out against the tanks, aeroplanes and other modern weapons of the Japanese until it was betrayed from the rear; the Vienna workers did not lose their fight in 1934 only because of technical inferiority in weapons but because of political weaknesses which led to military mistakes. There is no reason for believing that, as in November 1917, circumstances will not again place military superiority on the side of the workers.

## CHAPTER VII

### COMMUNIST BRITAIN

THE dictatorship of the proletariat, the revolutionary transition to socialism, must remain, despite the Russian experience, something of an abstraction unless we are able to consider it in English conditions. Of course, in making for ourselves such a picture of socialist Britain, we must draw all the time upon the rich stores of revolutionary experience of the Russian working class, adapting them to our own needs and the relationship of classes which exists in Britain. It is precisely here that the difference between Communism and reformism becomes deepest. For, while the capitalist class prepares inexorably for civil war, fortifying its broadcasting-stations, training its army officers and police in the technique of street-fighting, building up its fascist bands and its strike-breaking organisations, the reformist will never for one moment admit that revolution is "possible" in his own country. In any other country, yes. In his own, never. Nor is this accidental, since it arises from the whole theory and practice of reformism in restraining the working class from struggle, in persuading it that "socialism" can only come through co-operation with capitalism.

The arguments used are monotonously alike. Revolution was possible in Russia owing to the absence of "a large native middle class,"<sup>1</sup> ignoring the historical fact that the peculiarities of the Russian revolution have been determined precisely by the fact that the overwhelming majority of the population consisted of small peasant

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<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Barbara Wootton, *Plan or No Plan*, page 239.

property-owners, the most tenacious form of "middle class" in the world. In Britain, Mr. G. D. H. Cole argues, capitalism has made the class structure of society more complex and "the intermediate groups do not disappear, but wax in social and economic importance."<sup>1</sup> How false is such a statement in regard to Britain above all countries, we shall see presently. The final argument centres around the fact that Britain is not a self-sufficient country but dependent on others for most of its food and raw materials. A socialist revolution would deprive the country of these sources of supply. Strangely enough those who use this argument consider that a socialist State established "constitutionally" would meet no such difficulties. Evidently the producers of Britain's food and raw materials are persons of delicate moral scruples, quite willing to trade with the lawyers, merchants, stock-brokers, business-men, trade union leaders, retired officers and intellectuals who would be at the head of a "constitutional" "classless" society, but not with naughty working men and women who had attained the same end by violence. What is sauce for the Socialist League goose is most decidedly poison for the Communist gander.

The first objection, despite its contradictions, is the most valid. While there was nothing particularly simple in the class structure of Tsarist Russia, while this structure was undoubtedly *much less simple* than that of modern England, revolution in Russia was nevertheless not so difficult of achievement as it is proving in England and other advanced capitalist countries. The reason, of course, lay in the fact that Russian imperialism, for all its apparatus of terror, was fundamentally weaker than that of other countries, while the working class, under the able leadership of the Bolsheviks, was able to form an alliance with the main mass of

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<sup>1</sup> *The Working-class Movement and the Transition to Socialism*, page 15.

the peasantry, also oppressed by capitalism and by feudal relics.

Yet it has proved much more difficult in Russia, precisely because of the numerical weakness of the working class and the small property-owning, middle-class character of the peasantry, to build a socialist society than it is likely to be in Britain, or Germany, or the United States. Russia was able, under Lenin's leadership, to win the political premise of socialism, soviet power, relatively easily, but had practically none of the economic premises, a great development of heavy industries, electrification, advanced technique. Russia has proved, however, and this is the great world significance of the Bolshevik revolution, that given the political premise, given soviet power, the dictatorship of the proletariat, it is possible to create the economic premises for socialism. The experience of "Labour" rule in Britain, Germany, Scandinavia, Czechoslovakia, Austria and elsewhere has proved conclusively that without that political premise no amount of industrialisation, of economic premises, are of any avail. Socialism remains as far away as ever. Capitalism is still enthroned and the condition of the masses grows worse, not better.

Capitalism, just as it developed first in Britain, also developed there more remorselessly, destroying all other forms of property root and branch. In no other country in the world is agriculture so completely capitalistic as it is in Britain. No other country is so sharply divided into two great opposing classes, into "two nations," bourgeoisie and proletariat. True, for a number of reasons the struggle between those two nations has not been, at least since the middle of the last century, so bitter and so sharp as it has in other countries where the class divisions are less clear-cut. Chief among these reasons, as Marx and Engels pointed out, and Lenin emphasised after them, is the fact that for generations both proletariat and bourgeoisie have

been living at the expense of millions of peasants in the colonial and dependent countries. This has created in Britain a "bourgeois proletariat" alongside the actual bourgeoisie. To-day this condition of British class "peace" is rapidly disappearing as the general crisis of capitalism grows deeper, and once more the two nations are beginning to face one another with implacable hostility as the proletariat, to the disturbance of its "leaders," loses its respectable, bourgeois character.

What are the facts about the class structure of Britain and what is the relative strength of the opposing armies? The Census of Production gives us a clear enough picture of the situation in 1931. Of 21 millions "gainfully employed" in Great Britain and Northern Ireland about 2½ million can be reckoned as belonging directly to the property-owning classes, employers, owners of shops and small businesses, and farmers (who do not own their farms but in most cases own their own instruments of production). Very far from all these are large property owners. In fact most of them own small farms, shops or businesses. The "intermediate" sections, clerks, civil servants, teachers, salesmen and shop assistants, managers and foremen, total some 2½ million. There are some 2 million domestic servants, thoroughly proletarian by origin and by class position, but clearly enough as a result of the nature of their occupation difficult to reckon directly in the proletarian army. As opposed to this, factory workers, miners, transport workers and agricultural labourers, employed and unemployed, form a mighty army of nearly fifteen millions. A great many of these work in small shops and businesses, in hotels, catering, amusements, garages, carpentry shops, small building-yards and so on. Some of them are in the police or the armed forces. But nevertheless in referring to the working class we are justified in counting them as an immense army nearly fifteen million strong, with their wives and children who do not work

for wages probably 32 or 33 million human beings out of a total population of 46 million.

At the moment when the political activity, consciousness and organisation of the working class were at their highest, immediately after the war, over eight million were organised in trade unions. This included policemen (whose union was forcibly dissolved), and the great majority of workers in the armed forces were also thoroughly sympathetic towards the rapid leftward movement which then took place. It is easy to understand that against the organisation and determination of such a mass, controlling not only the transport and chief industry, but also the arms, the *artillery* of the country, no power on earth could stand, this was perfectly clearly recognised at the time and the anxiety of the ruling class is well reflected in the memoirs of its statesmen, soldiers and police chiefs. Unhappily there was no political force in existence at that time to give direction and aim to the movement, while a very powerful force existed in the shape of the Labour Party and Trade Union leadership which was able to misdirect and confuse this great proletarian army.

In Britain not only is the working class overwhelmingly predominant in numbers, it is also able to exert a very great influence in moments of crisis upon the *intermediate sections*. Among teachers, civil servants (of the lower grades), small shop-keepers, small-holders and poor farmers, radical traditions are still very strong and there are numbers who actively express their sympathy with the working class and even with the revolutionary movement. The General Strike of 1926 showed perfectly clearly that before a *united working class* the number of persons upon whom capitalism can rely, outside its own armed forces, is ridiculously small. It showed also, unfortunately, how the fear of the reformist leaders before such revolutionary unity leads them into open betrayal and splitting of the workers' forces and, consequently, into the loss of influence

over the more backward sections of the workers and the intermediate lower middle classes.

What kind of a working class is this? Without actually saying so, Mr. Cole, in the passage we have twice quoted, tries to give the impression that in Britain the tendency is not towards greater industrial units, towards squeezing out the small business and the small farm. He, and his fellow-thinkers likewise, would like to create the impression that the "small man" is becoming more important, or to use his own words, "waxing in social and economic importance." This, of course, is also the foundation of fascist theory, and indeed, most fascist "thinkers" have at one time or another belonged to similar schools of "socialist" thought to that represented by Mr. Cole. Here again, unluckily for the "scientific" basis of reformist thought, the facts all prove the opposite. There has certainly been an increase since the war in the number of clerical and administrative workers employed in industry, accompanied by a falling off in the number of productive workers in heavy industry. In 1907 there were 485,000 such "black-coated workers", while in 1920 the number had reached 880,000. But while the increase is proportionately a large one, it is an absolutely very small one. Moreover, far from the economic significance of this group having increased, it has actually greatly decreased owing to rationalisation of office work, low wages and a crushing burden of taxation. What is the cause of this numerical increase? Far from representing an increasing significance of the "small man" it represents precisely the opposite. The growth of monopoly, the greater concentration of industry, mean a frightful increase in its parasitic elements, salesmen, canvassers, publicity workers and so on.

It is difficult to give up-to-date figures on the concentration of industry in Britain, since the Census of Production for 1930 is not yet complete in this respect. In 1924, however, nearly one-third of the factory workers were



employed in giant firms with over 1,000 workers, while 70 per cent were employed in firms with over 100 workers. It is precisely in the most important industries, automobiles, iron and steel, chemicals and electricity, that the giant industrial unit is tending to become the rule. Even in clothing, which to-day still has half its workers in small shops with less than a hundred workers, the modern factory is rapidly becoming predominant, and giant firms employing the most modern rationalised methods, including the conveyor belt, are increasing.

So the second argument against the possibility of revolution in Britain must go, since in fact its very opposite is true. There is no other country in the world, with a class structure so clear and simple as that of Britain, no other country in which the working class plays such an overwhelmingly important part. There remains the last argument, that revolution is a *physical* impossibility owing to the peculiarities of the British economic structure. It is necessary to state at once that this argument is applied to their own country by reformists everywhere and is simply a variation of the Trotskyist thesis of the impossibility of building socialism in one country. The Austrian socialists in 1918-1919 refused to carry their revolution further on the grounds that a socialist revolution could not possibly succeed in Austria. It was argued in the past that no socialist revolution could ever be successful in Russia, and so *ad nauseam*.

However, it would be foolish not to admit that in Britain, as everywhere else, there are peculiar circumstances to be faced. Each country has its own difficulties and those in Britain are certainly no slight ones. But there are no difficulties which are insurmountable and the overcoming of difficulties is entirely in our own hands. If we surrender before the attack, we shall, of course, be defeated. If we plan our campaign in accordance with the conditions of the territory in which we operate, the disposition of the

enemy forces, the striking power and ability to manœuvre of our own, we shall be victorious.

To take first the question of food supply. It is quite certain that the British Isles are not self-supporting and could not be made so in any reasonable period of time. How would a socialist government face this position? With revolutionary courage and resource on the one hand, and with inexorable harshness towards those who tried to take advantage of it on the other. For it is reasonable to suppose that once the capitalist State had been overthrown in Britain the bourgeoisie would be powerless to gather forces for civil war, as happened in Russia. The overwhelmingly proletarian character of the population is a guarantee of this. It is now admitted by all experts that invasion of this island is militarily impossible, so that the only forms of intervention left are air attack and blockade by foreign capitalist powers.

Supposing that the workers of France or Germany were not at first strong enough to prevent air attack, it could be answered in two ways. First by counter-attack, and in this a Soviet Britain could certainly rely upon the military support of the Soviet Union, so that any power sending its squadrons over our industrial cities would have to expect counter-attack on two fronts, or in other words, be prepared to face war against two revolutionary countries, one possessing the strongest navy and the other the strongest army and air fleet in the world. Simultaneously, the revolutionary government would concentrate hostages at every objective likely to be bombed by enemy aircraft. On the whole, the bourgeoisie would hardly be likely to use indiscriminately such a dangerous weapon and it would certainly not be welcomed by the unfortunate members of the dispossessed ruling class in Britain.

There remains "bloodless" intervention by means of a blockade. Here again there are two forms of answer, offensive and defensive. England is one of the most

important markets in the world for certain foodstuffs and raw materials. Most of these can be obtained from countries within the Empire and carriage of them is normally guaranteed by the navy. A Soviet Britain would at once give independence to the Dominions and Colonies. If the bourgeoisie of Australia, India or Africa answered this by refusing to export their produce to Britain, then the working class of Britain would appeal over their heads to the workers and peasants in these countries. There is little doubt of the appeal being answered, since the first people to suffer from such a blockade would be the workers and peasants of the countries involved. It is interesting to note that when during the General Strike of 1926 certain sections of the Australian bourgeoisie raised the question of holding up supplies, the Australian workers answered spontaneously by forming Committees of Action to ensure there should be no blockade. Refusal by these countries to trade with Britain, if the embargo lasted long, could only bring economic ruin and therefore revolution, for their whole economy is constructed on the basis of British trade.

In England itself the existing food supplies would have to be strictly rationed until a normal supply was again ensured. It might even be necessary, as in Russia in 1918-20, to introduce a form of Communism in consumption, but on a stern class basis. Food for the workers first, what is left over, if any, for the former exploiters and their lackeys. Lastly, there should be no difficulty in keeping open the northern route to the Soviet Union by which timber, wheat, cotton and many other raw materials could be brought safely to British ports. The completion of the White Sea—Baltic Canal to Murmansk and the reconstruction of the Northern Railway, as well as the opening of new routes from Leningrad to the interior, particularly the Urals and the Don Basin, which will be completed by 1937, would here be of the utmost assist-

ance.

The greatest weapons of all in the hands of the British working class would, however, be those of class solidarity and of a correct colonial policy. The four and a half years bold defiance of British Imperialism in Indian courts and prisons by Philip Spratt and Ben Bradley in the Meerut Conspiracy Case will probably be found to have done more to ensure that the British workers will enjoy peaceful possession of power, if they are able to win it, than anything else. Certainly it is worth more than battleships or aeroplanes. The Indian masses, the colonial workers everywhere, have had a living and unforgettable proof that Communist Britain is not imperialist Britain, that the solidarity of the colonial and British workers is something more than a phrase. Lastly, we may note, if the Soviet Union completes the Second Five-Year Plan without interference the whole balance of class forces in the world will be changed. A successful revolution in any advanced capitalist country, Britain, France, Germany or Poland, would automatically place superiority in the hands of the working class on a *world scale*.

The "objections" to revolution in Britain raised by the reformists have no more validity than the objections once raised by reformists to revolution in Russia, and no other object than to conceal their own fear of socialist revolution and to infect the working class with their own defeatist spirit. Otto Bauer, the former leader of the Austrian workers, naively confesses in his "apology" for the Vienna rising that Dollfuss, whom history will hardly regard as a hero despite his unhappy end, was nevertheless, able to say scornfully to Bauer and his comrades during their secret negotiations, "the Austrian workers will never fight for such leaders!" Dollfuss judged the leaders correctly, if he misjudged the workers. The latter fought, not for their "leaders," but for their homes and lives. The lesson will not be lost on workers elsewhere in judging

those "leaders" who have no other policy than to discourage all militant activity and organisation on the grounds of its "hopelessness."

More important for the working class than wasting its energies in rebutting the argument that anything which may seriously threaten the "foundations of society" is impossible, is to consider the actual position with which they are faced and which they must overcome in order to guarantee bread, work and peace to the people of Great Britain. The main facts of that position are not difficult to see, since life itself impresses them with sufficient force upon our consciousness.

We have inherited an economic structure whose foundations were built in the happy days of British industrial monopoly. We have inherited a system largely based upon the extraction of tribute from economically backward peoples. We see that structure and that system cracking in the storms of a general collapse of the whole capitalist system of production and exchange. The basic industries of the country, coal, iron and steel, textiles, built up in the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth, industries which largely depended upon export for their prosperity, have received a shattering blow from which they cannot hope to recover under capitalism. It is from these, and from agriculture, the other forgotten basic industry, that the bulk of the permanent army of unemployed is drawn, the "human scrap" as Mr. Ramsay MacDonald elegantly terms them. In 1924 32.8 per cent of British industrial products were for export. In 1931 the proportion had fallen to 19.7.

There has been a great development of new industries largely for the home market; some of them, like wireless and artificial silk, are light industries producing for general consumption. Others, like the chemical, electrical and automobile and aeroplane industries, are very important heavy industries, a good proportion of whose produce is

exported. These industries are usually based on modern, highly rationalised, large-scale plants, and are to be found away from the old industrial areas.

As the export industries have dwindled, the importance of overseas and particularly of colonial investment has grown. The British capitalist class, or at least its ruling section, has begun to rely more and more upon the tribute it is able to squeeze from its subject and dependent peoples. At the same time the newer, more modern and more profitable industries have been protected by high tariffs which in their turn have called forth retaliation from imperialist rivals, thereby crippling even further the already overburdened export industries which relied both for markets and raw materials upon relatively unrestricted world trade.

World trade itself, from which the British shippers, bankers and merchants drew immense profits, is becoming every year more restricted and more difficult. There is no longer any stable world currency. Tariffs are everywhere prohibitive. Economic warfare is the rule rather than the exception between capitalist nations, and the nearer the return to "prosperity" the more dangerously acute becomes the warfare. This must inevitably be the case, since a normal period of "prosperity" is now quite impossible of achievement for capitalism as a whole and the struggle for markets is becoming a struggle for life.

The wars of the imperialist epoch, the burden of maintaining an Empire always on the verge of revolt, the threatening political crisis developing on the background of the general crisis of capitalism and the consequent mad expenditure on armaments, have all combined to pile up an almost unbearable burden of internal debt. In this situation the privileged position of the British working class is rapidly disappearing and unless they are able to resist successfully they must inevitably find themselves forced down to the level of life in fascist Central Europe

and Italy, to industrial serfdom.

If the working class in Britain are able successfully to prevent this by the only possible means, the overthrow of the existing order and the seizure of power by themselves, what would be their programme? What would be the character of a workers' dictatorship in Great Britain?

The first task of a successful working-class revolution in Britain would be the complete disarming of its enemies, the creation of a Red Army, Navy and Air Force, and of a workers' service of order in place of the existing police. The workers' Government would nationalise the land, the banks, the transport system and all large industrial enterprises, including the big estates. Having got firmly into its hands the power to impose its will upon the former exploiters and the commanding places of industry and agriculture, it could proceed to the complete socialist reconstruction of the country.

It does not need a very deep acquaintance with British realities to understand that only such a *socialist* reconstruction can in fact solve the country's problems. Practically every plan for the rational organisation of the country's industry, transport, agriculture or urban life is at present completely impossible of fulfilment owing to the fact that it at once encounters the resistance of numerous private-property interests. Already the questions of the planning of London have become such public scandals that future generations will hardly be able to believe in the bureaucratic stupidity which allowed them to continue for years. The capital of the greatest Empire in the world cannot manage its own traffic, not because of inability but because it is held to ransom by property owners who plunder it more remorselessly than all the gangsters of Chicago. The distribution of London's internal transport system is bound up in addition with the class character of our society. Whole vast areas with a teeming working-class population are scandalously served, while

the business, administrative and chief residential areas have a well-nigh perfect system of underground electric railways. An impartial observer who watched Liverpool Street Station in rush hours, or saw the queues for trams and buses in the East End and Eastern suburbs of London would conclude that he was visiting a city run by madmen. He would be wrong. It is a city owned by landlords.

Outside London, in the great conurbations of Birmingham, Manchester, the West Riding, Tyneside, Glasgow, the same features can be observed. But here there are worse horrors. Towns have sprung up spontaneously, unplanned. The housing of the workers in the main was created for them in the first half of the last century. The graces of a civilised community are completely absent, not because the people are savage, but because they are savagely exploited. The smoke, the dirt, the disorder of the English or Scottish industrial city must be seen to be believed.

All these are outward symptoms. Behind them is a fundamental ill. The industry and transport of Britain in its main features grew up in the half-century from 1825 to 1875. They were built up spontaneously, without plan, by a capitalist class which was becoming enormously wealthy upon a virtual monopoly of the world market. The monopoly has disappeared, never to return. The heritage of outworn plants, of exhausted coal-fields and ore beds, of decayed agriculture and a land stripped bare of forest wealth, remains. In parts of South Wales, of the Midlands, of Lancashire, Cumberland, Durham and the West of Scotland, whole areas are derelict and their populations condemned to slow decay.

No working-class government could accept this position. For the workers there is no such thing as "human scrap." The blast furnaces of South Wales, among the best equipped in the country, are now almost all idle owing to the fact that local supplies are worked out and it does not "pay" to import ore from Oxfordshire and Northamp-



tonshire. Yet with modernised transport and co-ordinated as part of a national planned industry, these furnaces, whose average capacity is the greatest in Britain, might work in full blast once more. Dowlais, Ebbw Vale, Blaenavon would come to life again.

In other cases, capitalism cannot reorganise heavy industry and run it economically because to do so would mean the scrapping of whole urban regions. Since there is no work to be found for the population, since the railway companies and other interests would strenuously object to the losses involved, the reorganisation cannot take place. This applies to almost all the coal-fields, where the old belts, the shallow parts of the fields, those first worked, are kept going as a burden on modern belts where the deeper "concealed reserves" are being worked. Capitalism cannot possibly undertake the social reorganisation involved in scrapping these older sections. It prefers to leave the towns and villages semi-derelict, their inhabitants sunk in hopeless poverty.

The question of restoring the coal industry by greater development of electrification and by mass application of the low-temperature carbonisation and hydrogenation processes for the production of gas and crude oil, has long been discussed "academically." The State has even given a great subsidy to the Imperial Chemical Industries Trust to build a hydrogenation plant. But a capitalist class which draws more in revenue from overseas investment and various "services" than from the profits of home industry is not likely to undertake the capital expenditure involved, while State subsidies, though pleasant, are necessarily limited.

The policy of the Labour Party, as outlined in its programme and in the pamphlets of its Socialist League "Left wingers" would not in fact touch the problem of reconstruction. By "buying out" on the lines along which the shareholders of the former London Transport concern

were "bought out," by turning big capitalists into "public administrators" at huge salaries, by nationalising the land through the creation of special land stock, the deadly grip of private property would not be loosened but tightened, and it would be tightened in precisely its most vicious form, the parasitic form.

The complete reconstruction for which Britain, more than any other capitalist country, cries out, could only be accomplished by a revolutionary government which took over without compensation all land, buildings, factories and transport. On no other basis is a planned economy possible. The integration necessary in the textile, coal, iron and steel industries, their socialist rationalisation and modernisation, would then be practical questions of everyday working-class politics. The revival of agriculture, reafforestation, on lines which would benefit in the first place the labourers and small holders and which would have as their chief consideration the supplying of the town workers with cheap and plentiful food and necessary raw materials, are also only conceivable upon a socialist basis. It is worth noting that between the Tory plans for agriculture now being put through by the former Fabian, Mr. Walter Elliott, and those of the Labour Party, there is no difference in principle. Both view the problem primarily as one of marketing, and therefore of assistance to the capitalist farmer, and not as one of reorganisation of production.

There can be little doubt that the complete reconstruction of British industry and agriculture, a reconstruction which is called for by capitalist conditions but which capitalism cannot carry out, would not only solve the question of the basic industries, and therefore of unemployment, but would rapidly create the same scarcity of labour as is now being experienced in the Soviet Union. The reasons are not far to seek. The abolition of the immense burden of internal and foreign debt, the freeing of the

people from tribute to the landlords, financiers and industrialists, would clear the way for a very rapid expansion in consumption. At present only thirty per cent of English homes have electric light. About two-thirds of the population are only able to buy new clothes of the worst quality and very rarely, while a very considerable proportion never buys *new* clothes at all, being dependent on the street markets. A great number of houses, particularly in the country, have no drainage and the whole water-supply of the country is completely chaotic. In the great cities most workers' homes are without baths and many without inside drainage. In the country, no baths and outside drainage are almost the rule. The number of municipal laundries and baths is ridiculously small. The quantity of fresh milk, eggs, butter, bacon and meat consumed by the majority of the population is about a third of what health and appetite demand. Wireless and telephones, though widespread, lag far behind many other countries in their general distribution.

The satisfaction of these elementary needs of the population would alone suffice to overcome the greater part of the crisis in British industry, though socialism must also undertake, in order to fulfil these tasks, the actual reconstruction of industry and agriculture themselves, the wiping out of the antiquated towns of the last century and their replacing by healthy, well-planned socialist cities. The electrification of industry and railway transport, particularly the bringing of hydro-electric power to Scotland and Wales, where it is peculiarly suited to the conditions, the reconstruction of the coal and iron industries, the mechanisation of agriculture (it is a myth that mechanisation is not suited to British conditions, it is only not always suited to the present landlord agriculture), the rebuilding of our cities and of our network of roads and bridges, the construction of a gas and water-grid, all these would ensure for a long time to come the full work-

ing of the heavy industries.

What would be the relation of such a socialist Britain to the capitalist world? Trade would be controlled by a State monopoly, but there is every reason to believe that, the difficulties of the first break once overcome, it would not diminish. Certainly, the capitalists of the United States would not rejoice at the repudiation of the debt, but the war debt has already been repudiated in practice by the present rulers of the country. Other countries, the Argentine, India, the Dominions, China, whose whole economy has been built up on the basis of trade with Britain, will hardly try to seek new markets in the doubly stricken world of capitalism. On the contrary, the annulling of all the debts they owe to British imperialism will for the first time put British trade on a basis of equality and open up vast new markets for British industry in the industrialisation of these countries. A socialist Britain, firmly united with the Soviet Union, while it will undoubtedly bring the internal crisis of capitalism to a head and probably prove the signal for a number of great revolutionary movements, will also provide the basis for a real revival of world trade on a socialist basis. Ships will no longer rust at anchor in the Scottish lochs and the yards of the country will ring with a new activity.

This is one side of a workers' dictatorship in Britain. But how about the working class themselves? In what ways will their position change? The universal seven-hour day, with a six-hour day in mining and industries dangerous to the health, will give the working class one of the first premises for a new life, leisure, hitherto the monopoly of capitalism. Greater quantities of skill, initiative and energy are stored up unused in the British working class than in that of any country. The release of the workers from wage-slavery will give these qualities full play for the first time.

— The working class will have to provide quantities of

administrators, managers, technicians, inventors, teachers, artists, writers, playwrights, actors, will have to flood every sphere of life with its overflowing energy. The breaking down of the capitalist monopoly of culture will open the way for a new culture of the emancipated working class. The Soviet Republic of Britain will in fact be a federation of Scotland, England and Wales, to which Ireland will probably join itself voluntarily when socialism is victorious there also. The four nations, their energies released, working in complete harmony, will be able to perform miracles of creative work that in a few years will put to shame the blundering performances of the imperialist clique which at present rules.

The supporters of capitalist society make great play of its gift of "freedom". Actually, as we have seen, even the formal democracy introduced by capitalism is beset by limitations which deprive it of all meaning for the working class. Soviet Britain will bring with it real democracy, carrying out all those reforms which capitalism, while talking of them, never dared introduce. The court and monarchy, the House of Lords, plural voting, property qualifications will be swept away. With the power of property broken, universal, direct, equal and secret franchise will for the first time have meaning. Soviet democracy will embody in itself all the good features of the parliamentary State, abandoning what is bad and adding a great deal that is new in order to accomplish its task of drawing the mass of the population into administration. Frequent reporting and the power of recall, open criticism of all candidates for office, will become regular features of the new democracy, the highest the world has yet known. Administration and control will be brought near to the people as the people are brought near to them.

The reconstruction of Britain, the creation of a soviet democracy, the building up of a new, socialist culture, will not come automatically as a result of the victory of the

working class. All these things will have to be fought for and for a long period the history of the country will be the history of a long and violent struggle between the old and the new. While it is true that there is only a very small class of petty property owners in the country whose psychology must be remade as they are absorbed into socialist production, there remains to be fought the heritage of a long period of triumph of the ideals and outlook of the former labour aristocracy. The battle against this heritage will be particularly difficult and obstinate, for the petty-bourgeois prejudices of this section have taken deep root and after the revolution will undoubtedly form a centre of resistance to the new world, a centre which will attempt to gather round itself the most backward sections of the workers, the former small property owners, the old intelligentsia and all discontented elements. Towards these people the working-class dictatorship will have a dual policy, of re-education wherever possible, of stern repression wherever necessary. The class struggle will continue in new forms after the workers have been victorious and taken power into their own hands, it will continue until the last resistance has disappeared, until the last relics of classes and class differences, both in people's mind and in the economy of the country, have also disappeared.

The "patriots" of British imperialism who keep the majority of the British people in poverty and ignorance, underfed and ill-clothed, in conditions in which their whole lives are materially and spiritually poisoned, are nearing the end of their power. For the people of the Islands, under the leadership of the working-class, to unite to throw off the strangle-hold of this robber band will not be easy and cannot be easy. The road to a new country, a country which shall belong to the working people, to an England, Scotland and Wales which shall mean something else to the world than violence, oppression and terror,

will be a hard road. But it is the road of history, along which we must pass.

The world of to-day is passing through an epoch of great change, a transition from one social system to another. There have been such epochs before in the past, particularly the epoch beginning with the revolutions in America and France at the close of the eighteenth century. "Politics", Lenin emphasised with profound insight into history, "begin where there are millions; not where there are thousands, but where there are millions, serious politics begin only there." The millions to-day are many more than during the epoch of bourgeois revolutions and they are far more profoundly moved. Infinitely greater masses of humanity are on the march to-day, far greater resources of organisation and technique are at their disposal, but they are faced with far greater difficulties, more complicated problems than ever before in human history. The transition to the new order will be accompanied by many wars and revolutions, as was the transition from feudalism to capitalism, and the part to be played by Britain in that epoch is of importance to the whole world.

In the last revolutionary period Britain was the citadel of counter-revolution. It has so far played the same part in the present epoch. But Britain to-day and Britain at the commencement of the nineteenth century are poles apart. The difference is the difference between Trafalgar and Jutland, between a Pitt and a Ramsay MacDonald, between a social system insolent with growth and health and a social system rotten with decay. There is no future for Britain in counter-revolution, only an accumulation of horror and wretchedness. To this fact are awaking not only the working class, but also ever wider sections of honest intellectuals and radical members of the middle classes.

Communism is no abstract idea, but a political movement of millions for bread and life, a great historical

process of revolutionary transformation rendered inevitable by the whole preceding development of capitalism. Every nation, every race will be affected differently by that transformation, will approach it differently, according to the historical peculiarities of its development, but no nation will stand outside this process. Already this movement of millions, this *real politics*, is making itself felt in every phase of modern life and modern civilisation. Capitalist decay, capitalist pessimism, capitalist poverty, capitalist violence, alike recoil before the enormous and relentless power of this movement of millions, a power which gathers strength slowly, which at times gropes blindly for a path, retreats with shattered ranks, but only to return with firmer and more invincible force.

The movement of millions will be victorious, not only because it is a movement of the immense majority of the people of the world, but also because, as history has irrefutably proved, mankind cannot longer develop if these millions remain submerged. Only the conquest of political power by the working class on a world scale can put an end to war, to violence and oppression, can ~~make~~ man master of the machine, can abolish all the conditions which inevitably give birth to war, poverty and oppression, and can build a new world society without classes and class antagonisms, "in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."



## SHORT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Even in English there is already in existence a great library of Marxist literature. For the reader who wishes to be acquainted with the first principles of Communist theory and practice the following selection of works by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin will probably be sufficient.

By Karl Marx and Frederick Engels.

*The Communist Manifesto.*

By Marx.

*Wage, Labour and Capital.*

*Critique of the Gotha Programme.*

*The Civil War in France.*

By Engels.

*Socialism, Utopian and Scientific.*

*The Origin of the Family, Private Property and The State.*

*Ludwig Feuerbach.*

By Lenin.

*Karl Marx* (the best summary of Marxism in existence).  
*Imperialism.*

*The State and Revolution.*

*What is to be done?*

By Stalin.

*Fundamentals of Leninism.*

*Problems of Leninism.*

The above are both to be found in Vol. I of the Collection called *Leninism*. Those interested in practical and theoretical questions of Socialist Construction should also read Stalin's Reports to the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Congresses of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

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